

THE UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN

NXELE AND NTSIKANA

A Critical Study of the Religious Outlooks of two nineteenth century Xhosa Prophets and their Consequences for Xhosa Christian Practice in the Eastern Cape.

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO

THE FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCE & HUMANITIES

FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES

BY

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JUNE 1987

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## ABSTRACT THESIS

This research into the religious outlooks of two Xhosa prophets of the nineteenth century establishes the importance of socio-political factors as determinants for theology. A need has been felt therefore to investigate matters of a historical nature in the inquiry on the existence of diverse religious reactions of amaXhosa to Christianity. It has been on that same basis that the missionary activity of that same era has been evaluated in this study.

Part one deals with the social life of amaXhosa as well as their political systems. It is recognised that land was regarded as an essential component of the religious life of amaXhosa. The close integration of the socio-political, economic and religious spheres of the life of amaXhosa determined that their religious ritual should be a celebration of that unity of life. The chief and inyanga were essential officiants at such religious rituals. All this arrangement accounted for a cohesion in the African traditional life. There were at the same time in-built measures for social control.

Part two attempts to evaluate the reaction of nineteenth century missionaries to Xhosa traditional religion. Here there is recognition that in the coming together of amaXhosa and Europeans, there were meeting exponents of different symbolic universes. A faithful adherence to what accounted for traditional background on the part of any of the two sectors, meant that there would be conflict. Because European Christian religion had the necessary strong, political and military supportive structure, it did not simply survive but made divisions in the Xhosa religious life. This it did by posing demands that Xhosa converts should make a complete break with their past.

The study ends by concluding that Western Christian religion erred in the demand to Europeanise Africa. It is suggested that so long as the tendency to destroy African traditional practices persists, there will be conflict within the church in South Africa. The church needs to relate its programme to the life of its African context.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am indebted to a number of people who have in various ways, helped with the compilation of this thesis. Among these have been:-

Professor G.M. Setiloane, my supervisor; Dr. J.B. Peires who helped with the reconstruction of the historic base; Felicia Jali, Hazel Naser and Pearl Yona who helped with the typing and editing; Michael Berning and Jackson Vena of Cory Library, Rhodes University.

The Harry Oppenheimer Institute; the Canadian Church Fund and the Diocese of Grahamstown provided an essential financial assistance.

My wife, Nomathamsamnqa who did more than what is conventionally recognised as her role deserves a special word of gratitude. Our children, Makhosandile, Mangaliso and Ntombekhaya have this study dedicated to them.

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## CHAPTER 1

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND TO EARLY NINETEENTH  
CENTURY EASTERN CAPE.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, present day Eastern Cape was the scene of tension and confrontation between amaXhosa and migrating trekboers. AmaXhosa were at this same time torn asunder by internal strife which made it impossible for them to resist the trekboers. This study is devoted to an examination of the experiences of amaXhosa who by this time had divided into two tribal groups, amaNdlambe and amaNgqika. Both these Xhosa groups were at this time subjected to pressure as white colonists were invading their land. No less than nine wars were fought between amaXhosa and Europeans, and that within a period of one hundred years. Our attention is confined to two of those wars and they are the Fourth (1811-12) and the Fifth 1819. While the fourth war between amaXhosa and the colonists had created a situation of need for men with capabilities such as Nxele and Ntsikana had, the fifth marked their exit from the historical scene. This was particularly true in the case of Nxele.

These two men invariably referred to as prophets by Western scholars, emerged to head two differing religious traditions. Nxele, a war-like nationalist emphasised African beliefs and culture in his work, while Ntsikana preferred the course of a pacifist Christian.<sup>1</sup> The difference between the two evinced itself as the two reacted to Christianity, the religion to which they were being introduced by Whites round about that

same time. The basic question to answer in this respect was whether a black converted to Christianity, received Christian baptism and entered into a Christian church could be said to be free. If so how seriously was that freedom reflected in the circumstances of his socio-political life. Is Christianity about distinctions between religious freedom and political freedom?

#### DIVISION OF AMAXHOSA INTO AMANDLAMBE AND AMANGQIKA.

The designation of the Eastern Cape Nguni as amaXhosa has been said to originate with a eponymous heroic figure name 'Xhosa' who lived many years ago. Xhosa was according to this view the son of Mnguni and a brother to Zulu and Swazi.<sup>2</sup> The group which enjoyed some steadiness of composition occupied, during the period of our investigation, the territory between the Sundays and the Mbashe rivers. They covered the coastal strip along the Indian Ocean, an area of temperate grasslands. Both by fusion and division amaXhosa were constantly reorganized into smaller units politically with new sub-chiefs emerging as leaders. It is along these lines that the division among amaRharhabe around about 1795 should be interpreted. AmaNdlambe and amaNgqika as tribal sectors within amaRharhabe resulted from domestic feuds.

In so far as the division of amaRharhabe into amaNdlambe and amaNgqika had implications for the religious outlooks of Nxele and Ntsikana, we are obliged to probe into the reasons for the conflict between the two groups. Rharhabe the King of amaXhosa had died in a battle against abaThembu in 1782.

His son Mlawu who would have succeeded was killed in the same battle. Mlawu's son, Ngqika who normally should have taken over as King, was a minor of eleven years of age. It was therefore decided by councillors that Ndlambe, Ngqika's uncle should reign as regent.<sup>3</sup>

Ndlambe who demonstrated outstanding qualities as regent soon established his power over a number of chiefdoms in his area. He made an alliance with Barend Lindeque, a lieutenant in the Boer militia, even though European involvement in domestic politics was resented by groups living West of the Fish river.<sup>4</sup> That for him had the advantage of making his position as regent even more secure. In all that he did Ndlambe had the well-fare of the young Ngqika at heart. Not only did he prepare Ngqika for kingship but took him to battle against minor chiefs. For example in 1793 Ndlambe who was helped by Lindeque and Ngqika attacked neighbouring groups. This good relationship between Ndlambe and Ngqika was not destined to last for long, for in 1795 Ngqika rebelled against his uncle. He had suspicions that Ndlambe would not surrender regency. Even though Ngqika had been installed as chief round about this time, he still went on and attacked Ndlambe.<sup>5</sup> The latter was taken prisoner by Ngqika who kept him at his Great Place. Ngqika began to claim the paramountcy of all amaXhosa. This situation did not last for more than five years for in 1800 Ndlambe had escaped from Ngqika's Great Place. He recrossed the Fish river to join a large body of amaXhosa who were living in the Zuurveld.<sup>6</sup> He

was most welcome among the clans living in the area because the majority were his former followers who had fled there when Ngqika gained victory. AmaGqunukhwebe under Cungwa also occupying the area preferred to maintain a precarious independence. Even though they were not openly hostile to amaNdlambe, they contested the right of ownership of the area. This point will receive more attention in the next chapter.

Relying on his former skills of diplomacy in nation building, Ndlambe soon devoted his energies to developing the prestige and influence he had once enjoyed.<sup>7</sup> With the help of his brothers Siku and Mjalusa he began to strive for solidarity among the chieftains of the Zuurveld. Keen to include Cungwa, his long-standing and bitter enemy, he arranged a marriage between his daughter to one of Cungwa's sons. Ndlambe had given away in marriage a daughter only to gain an alliance of a whole tribe. Ngqika realized that Ndlambe was no longer alone in the Zuurveld, but surrounding him were imiDange, amaMbalu and amaGqunukhwebe. Slaves who had run away from the colony came to live among amaNdlambe. This meant that Ndlambe had a tremendous power, and as such posed a threat to Ngqika. Feeling insecure and not so certain about the developments of the political situation, Ngqika began to solicit alliance with whites. He welcomed a party of Boer rebels under Coenraad de Buys to live among amaNgqika. Buys lived with Ngqika's mother.<sup>8</sup> Even though not actually allowed to set up a mission station,

VanderKemp was granted permission to live among amaNgqika indefinitely. Governor Janssens visited Ngqika's land in 1803, and he and his party were made to feel very welcome. Ngqika used these contacts for purposes of acquiring gunpowder, as well as an opportunity to discredit Ndlambe.<sup>9</sup> By 1805 Ngqika was almost ready to launch an attack on Ndlambe. This in fact did not materialise. Landdrost Alberti who was not keen on a Xhosa civil war in the area West of the Fish river discouraged the advance of amaNgqika on amaNdlambe.<sup>10</sup> It was clear by this time that the Xhosa nation had become divided into two sectors. Ndlambe and Ngqika wielded considerable power and influence among their respective groups.

#### THE ABDUCTION OF THUTHULA BY NGQIKA

Even though the abduction of Thuthula, one of Ndlambe's wives by Ngqika might have been executed for political reasons,<sup>11</sup> it no doubt dented his image among his people. This was because of moral, ethical and therefore religious reasons. Political power that chiefs had over their subjects had its base of legitimation among the people themselves. The chief earned the loyalty of the people. They reserved to themselves a number of options which they would apply depending on the circumstances of the situation. By desertion or by threats of desertion, which were the most effective means of resistance, commoners exercised control over their chief. This control was not confined simply to matters of a political or social nature.<sup>12</sup>

His moral life was also sanctioned by these means. On the other hand the loyalty of subjects to a chief could not be reconciled with transgression on his part against the ancestors. 'Umbulo' (incest)<sup>13</sup> was an offence not only against society but ancestors. There was religiosity about the bond of relationship between chief and subjects, as well as subject and subject.

Cory observes that great indignation was aroused by that upardonable offence. Loyalties of the Xhosa got transferred from Ngqika to Ndlambe.<sup>14</sup> Ndlambe had sympathisers not just among neighbouring tribes, but even among amaNgqika. A member of amaNgqika deserted to Ndlambe whose position was thus consolidated. No less than two rebellions took place among amaNgqika. Law and order among amaNgqika so collapsed that in the end Ngqika was forced to flee to the mountains leaving his Great Place burning. By 1807 Ngqika was a broken man, and his image in the eyes of whites was consequently tarnished. He could no longer be treated as an equal. Peires claims that after the Thuthula debacle, Ngqika became a mendicant (a beggar) both politically and materially, begging the Colony for revenge on Ndlambe, and for clothes, cattle and brandy.<sup>15</sup>

To a chief reduced to such dire straits, the propositions at the Kat River Conference made by Governor Lord Charles Somerset in 1817 were most welcome. The white colonial government conferred on him the status of a paramount chief

with powers to chastise other Xhosa chiefs. He was restored to a position of power over a number of chiefdoms, among whom were amaNdlambe and amaGqunukhwebe. How this happened, and how white power steered the course of native politics to its advantage becomes the next point to consider.

#### WHITE COLONISTS MEET AMAXHOSA

It was not long after Europeans had landed at the Cape where they wished to set up a half-way station to the East, that they began to expand into the hinterland. Free burghers and later trekboers having found the settled gardening projects of the refreshment station rather restrictive, had sought freedom in land beyond the mountains of the Cape. While on such migrations, the colonists made their business to acquire as much stock from the native groups they encountered as possible, through bartering. These transactions between whites and amaXhosa often led to conflicts. According to MacMillan, the earliest recorded conflict over cattle bartering was in 1702.<sup>16</sup> Not even that skirmish could discourage 'the cattle - trading expeditions' that were being carried out by whites at that time. Having discovered the wealth of amaXhosa in cattle, Europeans became the more determined to improve their own fortunes. Trading expeditions accounted for a considerably high traffic between the Colony and Xhosa-land. A need was felt by the Cape Colonial government for this coming together of blacks and whites to be regulated as

well as controlled.<sup>17</sup>

In the year 1778 Baron Van Plettenberg , a governor of the Cape Colony, while touring along the upper reaches of the Great Fish River, concluded a treaty with some Gwali chiefs.<sup>18</sup> By that treaty the Fish River was fixed as the dividing line between the Colony and what were termed Native territories. According to this new arrangement, the land between Fish River and the Bushman River, designated Zuurveld by colonists belonged to Europeans. AmaXhosa who had otherwise lived in the area from time immemorial were forcefully removed by whites who by this new measure understood themselves as empowered to dislodge them. Among amaXhosa groups that were affected by that displacement were amaNdlambe, amaGqunukhwebe, amaMbalu, imiDange, amaGwali and amaNtinde. These were Xhosa groups that were fairly dispersed and established in the area West of the Fish River.<sup>19</sup> Interestingly by the time that that agreement was drawn, no Europeans had established any permanent places of residence in the area. European claims could not be based on prior occupation.<sup>20</sup> This whole situation impelled amaXhosa to engage in war against colonists in the year 1779.

Van Plettenberg's policy of separation between territories that belonged to whites and those of amaXhosa is of significant historic importance to the question of race relations in South Africa.<sup>21</sup> It provided a point of reference for a



number of successive governors, and has accordingly continued to do so up to the present day.<sup>22</sup> But for a number of reasons that policy has been found to be questionable as well as repulsive by both scholar and African nationalist. Firstly, the treaty was negotiated and concluded without reference to any of the greater chiefs West of the Kei, especially the royal amaRharhabe. For the simple reason that the agreement was made with minor chiefs who had very limited authority, it has been criticised among amaXhosa for its fraudulence. Secondly, the total disregard of the boundary line by amaXhosa was expressive of a conflict in understanding. It could not be clear to amaXhosa what the expectations of the colonial powers were. There had been failure of proper consultation and communication between amaXhosa and the Europeans.<sup>23</sup> AmaXhosa could have rightly questioned the credentials of Baron Van Plettenberg. Recently come as strangers to the borders of Xhosaland it was rather presumptuous of the Europeans to dictate the terms for how the communities of the area should be arranged.<sup>24</sup> The words of Ndlambe used in another context of expulsion from the Zuurveld, are a succinct articulation of that defiance. "This land is mine I won it in war, and intend to keep".<sup>25</sup> Thirdly, recently there has been a review and criticism of the myth about the existence of 'empty space' in the area West of the Fish River before Whites came.<sup>26</sup> The myth sedulously put forward by historians has been used to justify the claim that government in these parts has always

been a monopoly of those with military power.<sup>27</sup> It has been denied by the advocates of this view that amaXhosa ever lived a settled community life. They were fighting one another with the centre of power fluctuating from one hand to the next. Otherwise according to this myth blacks and whites arrived at the same time and occupied the Zuurveld which had been an empty space. This assertion is motivated by ideological considerations rather than historical fact. This point should receive further attention when later in the study we examine the question of land and faith among amaXhosa.

#### CAPE FRONTIER POLITICS AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS FOR THE RELIGIOUS LIFE OF AMAXHOSA.

During our period of study there were important centres of power among amaXhosa. AmaNdlambe and amaNgqika had emerged as two major groups following the feuds between their founders. The vassalage of the less prominent chieftains was fairly distributed among the more consolidated and distinct amaNdlambe and amaNgqika. This happened because during the rebellion of 1807 where Ndlambe and Ngqika fought over Thuthula, some important chiefs defected from Ndlambe and joined Ngqika.<sup>28</sup> In that way they denied Ndlambe a conclusive victory. This happened because they feared both Ndlambe and Ngqika. By tradition and practice, it was recognised that Ngqika was a senior chief of the two. While Ngqika and his followers continued to live East of the Fish river, Ndlambe and Cungwa the chief of ama-

Gqunukhwebe remained on the West. This meant that they lived in the area proclaimed white by the terms of Van Plettenberg's treaty. Ndlambe was the recognised leader of all the Zuurveld amaXhosa.

Neither Ngqika nor Ndlambe and Cungwa could ignore the reality of the presence of European colonists among them for too long. This was impossible to do particularly in the case of the latter two. Following the first Xhosa war the colonists had organised themselves into commandoes with the sole purpose of driving the blacks out of the Zuurveld. In November 1780 the Council of Policy ratified the treaty that made the Fish River the boundary.<sup>29</sup> It went further to appoint Adriaan Van Jaarsveld as the 'Commandant of the Eastern Country'. The Commandant was a thirty five year old soldier with an experience of conduct of a number of punitive expeditions against the Khoisan and Bushmen. It was clear that this new arrangement was calculated to pressurise amaXhosa. The pressure exerted on the borders of Xhosaland by Whites was soon felt internally through spasms of unrest.

"The feuds of the Bantu were obviously not unconnected with the menacing proximity of the white man....."<sup>30</sup> declared MacMillan. By the year 1803 Ngqika even though not so directly involved and rather more distant from white rule acknowledged the Fish River as the boundary. This could not be so with Ndlambe who, living in the area affected, maintained an

attitude of resistance and made constant attacks on the colonists. The attitude of resistance was there in Ndlambe not because he was of a belligerent nature but because he was convinced that the land of dispute belonged to amaXhosa rather than the colonists.

The decision taken by the British government in 1806 whereby they took the Cape into their possession, made the situation of amaXhosa even more untenable. On the frontier the Colonial government was represented by Colonel Collins who had his headquarters in Graff-Reinet. Acting on the instructions of the governor, second Earl of Caledon, Collins visited the frontier to investigate whether amaXhosa could be expelled from the Colony without the use of force. He found Ngqika in some remote part of his country. The latter bore signs of destitution, as he had no more than ten cows, very few oxen and only a few followers.<sup>31</sup> Ngqika who used that as an opportunity to disparage Ndlambe, otherwise made a good impression on Collins because he was<sup>a</sup> very intelligent man. Ndlambe was at his summer grazing place when Collins arrived. He was gracious and friendly during the amiable discussion with Collins. Yet Collins returned to Graff Reinet to recommend: "The 'permanent tranquility' of the frontier ..... required three things: 'to oblige all the Caffres to withdraw to their own country; to oppose insurmountable obstacles to their return to the colony; to remove every inducement to their conti-

nuance near the boundary".<sup>32</sup> This was confirmation that the British had decided to retain the arrangement made by Van Plettenberg. Collins had not been satisfied with the negotiations with Ndlambe and thus forced removals of amaXhosa from the Zuurveld were recommended.

The event of the fourth Frontier War (1811-12) requires a detailed study. This is so for it had implications not only for the socio-political life of the Eastern Cape but the religious life of amaXhosa. For its devastating and dehumanising effect on their life, that war caused amaXhosa to opt for a different form of leadership. Political figures such as Ndlambe and Ngqika, even though the latter was not so severely affected, exchanged their power with iinyanga.<sup>33</sup> The war had caused a vacuum in the life of amaXhosa in response to which Nxele and Ntsikana emerged. A problem was created for Christianity in that, being a religion that whites were introducing at that very same time, it could hardly hope to be regarded with no suspicion at all.

Commenting on the nature of contact and relations amaXhosa and Europeans had at the beginning of the nineteenth century, Elphick compared these to experiences of 'a couple in a disastrous forced marriage'. "They would fear and fight each other, but neither would destroy the other. In fact their

constant battle to gain the upper hand or stand up against one another was what made their lives meaningful and morbidly filled their daily thoughts".<sup>34</sup> As often as amaXhosa were driven across the Fish River by the colonists who had become more assertive of the boundary line, they returned. Meantime, according to a European assessment of the situation, amaXhosa had ceaselessly presented themselves as more of a menace than a nuisance. There were accusations of thefts and reports of acts of violence supposed to have been inflicted by blacks on the whites of the Zuurveld. These allegations had become so serious and unbearable that Europeans decided to flush amaXhosa out of the Colony.<sup>35</sup> AmaXhosa had a totally different interpretation of that same situation. Even for diplomatic reasons, both Ndlambe and Ngqika realized the importance of maintaining a good relationship with Europeans. At times they competed for white approval so fiercely as to render themselves vulnerable. Each in turn used opportunities of private interview with colonial authorities to demoralize the other.<sup>36</sup> The political arrangement made by Europeans alone, could not hope to last for too long. This was particularly so for amaXhosa failed to identify with this new dispensation. Also there was added here the problem of European attitudes to questions of neighbourliness. Commenting on this subject Cory said: "When a civilized, or perhaps semi-civilised peoples settles down in regions contiguous to those occupied by barbarious and warlike tribes, the predatory instincts of the latter will probably be kept in check only at the muzzels of the guns of the former. Without legislation, wise and efficient, with power to enforce its dictates, there must be continued struggles until the side capable of spilling the most blood becomes the dominant people".<sup>37</sup>

In September 1811 Governor Sir John Cradock succeeded Caledon in Cape Town. The background of the new governor included experiences of suppressing insurrections in Ireland and India.<sup>38</sup> He had distinguished

himself as an ardent protector of British imperialistic interests in both the contexts. There had come to the Cape in January 1806 and in command of the 93rd Sutherland Highlanders a soldier named John Graham. Even though he had come originally to engage Dutch forces under General Janssens, Graham ended his career in the Eastern Cape where he fought against amaXhosa.<sup>39</sup> On October 6 1811 Graham was ordered by Cradock to, "take the caffre nation, marauders of any description, and that they be repelled permanently within their own boundaries"<sup>40</sup>. Clearly the time for negotiation with amaXhosa was over. Violence was to be the only means of clearing the Zuurveld of amaXhosa. The attitude of the general to amaXhosa as well as his task regarding them was expressed in a letter he wrote round about this time:

"From every information.....it appears to be the general idea that, in the event of its being found necessary to employ forcible measures for the purpose of expelling the Kafirs from His Majesty's Territories - these savages will endeavour to penetrate through the immense extent of woods country to the rear of the commands.....it may from experience be expected that they will, instigated by furious revenge, commit every act of barbarous cruelty which their unrestrained passions can suggest....."<sup>41</sup>

Ngqika having been assured by the landdrost of Graff-Reinet, Andries Stockenstrom of immunity against the military operations could afford not to be involved.<sup>42</sup> Above the word of assurance that the hostile operations were to be waged

against his uncle Ndlambe and Cungwa, Ngqika had been given by the colonists five hundred head of cattle to distribute among his people. He was given further six hundred to keep in reserve. <sup>43</sup>The gifts achieved the desired effect of inducing sleep in that great king at a time when the rest of Xhosaland was on fire. Apart from the gifts and promises of exemption from attack, there were other reasons why Ngqika would not engage in war. According to some view, Ngqika had become a spent force. He was drinking excessively, and shared in this act of moral weakness with his son, Maqoma. He was often on the floor dancing to the amusement of colonists who generally visited his kraal. The Great Place of amaNgqika had become inundated with Europeans who fled from the colony. <sup>44</sup>These had served to divert the attention of amaNgqika from matters of national concern. This whole situation meant that the colonial army could concentrate its operations on the Xhosa in the Zuurveld with no fear of a counter attack from behind. They exploited in that manner the issue of the division among amaXhosa to their advantage.

The British army entered the Zuurveld in three divisions, one under Landdrost Cuyler, the other under Landdrost Stockenstrom, while the last one was under Captain Fraser. Peires describes the war that followed (Fourth Frontier War) as having been brief and ferocious. <sup>45</sup> Relying on the relationship they imagined they still had with colonists, the chiefs made a plea to



be allowed to stay on until their crops were fully harvested. That request could not be heeded. In fact the time of the harvest had been deliberately chosen for the attack. Villages, huts and gardens were burnt down. Heads of cattle and other stock were captured by the British army. Commenting on the outcome of that war, Graham declared in a letter written at this time: "Hardly a trace of a Kafir now remains. Almost all they saw were killed or wounded....."<sup>46</sup> Not all amaXhosa were killed in that battle though. Some twenty thousand amaNdlambe and amaGqunukhwebe managed to escape and crossed the Fish River, leaving the Zuurveld behind. Ndlambe was among those that fled. He and Ngqika were once more brought together. No sooner had Ndlambe crossed the Fish River than he set about securing himself a domain in the land of amaNgqika. At that time Ngqika lacked the power to resist his uncle. What more Ndlambe had powerful allies among a number of Xhosa minor chiefs.<sup>47</sup> The irony of the whole situation was that Ngqika could no longer claim non-involvement in the affairs of the Zuurveld. The amount of stock he had received from the colonists might have helped him cope with the feeding of the refugees, but it could not have solved his problem of the shortage of land.

It was during this time of crisis in the history of amaXhosa that Nxele and Ntsikana, the iinyanga (diviners) emerged. They came to fill in the life of the Xhosa nation a vacuum that had been created not so much by defeat as by disposse-

ssion of land.<sup>48</sup> This point Peires fails to appreciate where he simply accuses MacMillan of failing to prove that land to amaXhosa was an economic commodity. Land was a valuable commodity not only for economic reasons, but it was tied up with their religion. The misfortune of losing land meant that amaXhosa had been denied access to their ancestors, the true custodians of the land. It was to sources of wisdom that amaXhosa were turning as they made an appeal to Nxele and Ntsikana. AmaXhosa wanted to restore lost channels of communication with their ancestors.<sup>49</sup> Peires misses a very important point in this regard. This is in so far as he approaches the subject of the emergence of iinyanga using foreign and western categories with all their emphasis on only the rational and economy.<sup>50</sup> A chapter in this study is devoted to the question of the relationship of land and religion among amaXhosa. This point should receive a better elucidation then.

The vocation of each of the iinyanga coincided with the crisis of the loss of land. How each inyanga responded to the political situation that had developed, that was influenced by his tribal affiliations. For instance it was inevitable for this to be influenced by the question of whether he was umNdlambe or umNgqika. Up to that point where amaNdlambe had been violently driven out of the Zuurveld they steadfastly maintained that the land was theirs. Not even the state of alienation and exile was going to convince them otherwise. Nxele

was umNdlambe. And part of his loyalty to the tribe involved an adherence to certain dominant religio-political views as were prevalent among amaNdlambe. These dominant views determined that amaNdlambe ceaselessly claimed the Zuurveld as belonging to them. There are strong suggestions that Nxele in fact shared in the banishment of amaNdlambe. <sup>51</sup>If that was the case Nxele can be said to have fully appropriated the life experiences of his people, including its bitter dimensions of expropriation from the native land. Ntsikana was umNgqika. His close association with Ngqika caused the latter to emphasise matters of diplomacy, that is strive for 'jaw, jaw' rather than 'war war', doing it even where things were to his detriment. <sup>52</sup>What more Ndlambe and amaNgqika were not really threatened to the same extent. Ntsikana's work of 'ubunyanga' was affected by the political experiences of amaNgqika.

Nxele and Ntsikana had a special attraction for their respective communities in that in the discharging of their assignments as iinyanga, they struck responsive chords in the people among whom they served. <sup>53</sup>They addressed particular areas of need in the lives of the people. Their utterances were influenced by such considerations as time and need in the life situations of their respective communities. It was natural that they differed in their view of reality in each situation. Peires observes in this respect that: "The revelation of

Ntsikana, like that of Nxele, gradually emerged through a combination of personal evolution and external pressure. But Ntsikana's thought developed in the opposite direction to Nxele's, towards Christianity rather than away from it".<sup>54</sup> Yet they were under tremendous pressure from the same source. The political situation that had developed on the frontier required these religious leaders to help the Xhosas evolve structures of survival as their cosmological world was at this same time threatened.

When the missionaries came to Xhosaland to preach the Gospel, it proved inevitable that they came into contact with those iinyanga (the diviners). This became so because of the spiritual nature of vocation of Nxele and Ntsikana. The iinyanga were looked upon to give guidance when it came to matters of a religious nature.<sup>55</sup> They led therefore the Xhosa responses to the message of the missionaries. The greater part of the problem that this thesis is about lies in this area. Nxele and Ntsikana differed in their religious response to Christianity. While Nxele adhered to his African traditional religion, Ntsikana adopted <sup>the</sup> it. Whether preaching of the Gospel to blacks by whites should have been solely confined to matters of a spiritual nature, is a question this thesis will be trying to find answers to. Legitimate questions about such matters as violence, oppression, racial discrimination are being raised by black theologians in this regard. The feel-

ing is that church structures have been rather too tolerant as far as some of these abominations were concerned. The church been seen to be too much identified with the status quo., especially by the young black.

In summing up we can say that this chapter makes the point that by the beginning of the nineteenth century, amaXhosa were already fairly distributed along the coastal strip of the Cape. It is white South African historical tradition that has in fact argued that amaXhosa arrived in the Cape as immigrants around about the same time that whites landed at Table Bay.<sup>56</sup> AmaXhosa had good reasons to view the area that they occupied as theirs. Land for amaXhosa had both a religious and an economic importance. It will be demonstrated in the next chapter that for reasons of a religio-economic nature, land and cattle could not be treated as exclusive. AmaXhosa shared in common with other African peoples traditional beliefs where home was the place where the forebears were buried.. Home was the place where sacrificial beasts were slaughtered and biddings made. It was where the family kraal stands, with manure collected over generations. All communication with the ancestors was conducted within the kraal.<sup>57</sup> This study shall demonstrate the disadvantages sustained where no adequate attention was given to the close relationship between amaXhosa and their land.

Two commoners, Nxele and Ntsikana had emerged as iinyanga (diviners) among amaXhosa each proposing his own solution to

the problems posed by the white intrusion.<sup>58</sup> This change of leadership among amaXhosa from purely political to religious leaders was not a switch from the secular to the sacred. It was not a flight from reality to fantasy either. There was a dynamism about the religious outlook of each of these iinyanga. They responded differently even though faced with the same situation of the socio-political oppression of their communities. The difference is that while Nxele was out and out to resist, Ntsikana preferred to slide and ride on the turbulent wave of white invasion.<sup>59</sup> Ntsikana did this by employing Western

Christian resources rather than the traditional resources. This happened because the predominant missionary belief of the day was that Christianity and civilization were equivalents. Here it was accepted without hesitation that the teaching of Western technology was essential for the opening of the minds of the people to the gospel message. Christianity and African religious tradition were viewed here as irreconcilable.

The last chapter of this thesis is devoted to a comparison of the roles of Nxele and Ntsikana with those of the African and Black theologians. It is the assumption of this thesis that the oppression resulting from the iniquitous laws of Apartheid has posed a challenge for black theologians to emerge as important leaders. This has been particularly so as a situation of political vacuum has been created in South Africa. The black authentic political leadership is either

detained, imprisoned or exiled. The appearance of the controversial 'Kairos' document has been expressive on the need for the matters of the day to day existence not to be ignored.<sup>60</sup> African and Black theologies, with culture and black experience as starting points of theological discussion, have criticised the tendency by Western theology to treat the Gospel as though restricted to spiritual matters only. Identifying with the status quo westerners have argued for a dichotomy between politics and religion. This position is found questionable in this study. This study seeks to demonstrate that such a dichotomy is foreign to African religious thought and beliefs.

FOOTNOTES

1. Jeff B. Peires, "NXELE, NTSIKANA AND THE ORIGIN OF THE XHOSA RELIGIOUS REACTION", Great Britain: Journal of African History, 20,1, 1979, p 51.

2. Peires, The House of Phalo, Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1981, p 13

Albert Kropf, Das Volk der Xosa - Kaffern, Berlin: Berliner Evangelischen Missions - Gesellschaft, 1887.

3. Peires, House of Phalo, pp 48-51.

4. Ibid., p 51.

5. John Milton, The Edges of War, Johannesburg: Juta & Co., 1982, p 39.

H. Lichtenstein, Travels in Southern Africa, 2 Vols  
Reprinted Cape Toen: Van Riebeck Society, 1928, p 354.

George E. Cory, The Rise of South Africa, Vol I, London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1910, p 26

6. Donald Moodie, (1840), The Record, Reprinted Cape Town: A.A.Balkema, 1960, pp 110 - 111.

7. Milton, Edges of War p 56

8. Peires, House of Phalo, p 52



9. Milton, Edges of War, pp 53 - 55

10. Alberti Ludwig, Account of the Xhosa in 1807 trans W. Fehr  
Cape Town: A.A. Balkema, 1968, pp 105 - 106.

Lichtenstein, Travels in Southern Africa, p 354

Cory, Rise of South Africa, p 87. According to Cory, Ndlambe was still in Ngqika's domain as a prisoner. By this act Ngqika was securing his position by adding Thuthula to his own establishment.

Milton, Edges of War, p 57. "The most charitable interpretation of this action is that Ngqika hoped by it to provoke Ndlambe to leave his refuge in the Zuurveld and cross the Fish in pursuit of Thuthula. The less charitable view is that Ngqika the sensualist was grantifying his appetite for beautiful women".

12. Peires, HOUSE OF PHALO pp 34 - 40.

13. Human relations among amaXhosa have a spiritual dimension where ancestors participate. Incest among amaXhosa is a religious offence which could invoke the anger of the ancestors. Because of incest 'izinyanya' could turn into 'imishologu' whereby they ushered in not benevolence by evil.

14. Cory, RISE OF SOUTH AFICA, p 87.

15. Peires, HOUSE OF PHALO, P 60.

16. W.M. MacMillan, Bantu, Boer and Briton London: Faber and Gwyer, 1982, p 8

17. Ibid., p 26.

18. M.S. Geen, The Making of South Africa, Cape Town: Maskew Miller, 1958, p 37. Geen gives the names of the two Xhosa petty chiefs as Koba Godisa.

19. MacMillan, Bantu, Boer and Briton p 26

20. J.S. Marais, Maynier and the First Boer Republic, Cape Town: Maskew Miller, 1944, pp 5 - 6.

Milton, Edges of War, "There was, however, one serious obstacle to the actual incorporation of this territory into the territorial possessions of the Dutch East India Company: the Xhosa were already in occupation of it".

21. MacMillan, Bantu, Boer and Briton, p 27. There was more to it than simply strengthening colonial jurisdiction in a danger zone which was also the principal scene of the illicit barter that was rife between colonists and Kafirs. The Zuurveld was some Nahaboth's vineyard in the sense of being a jewel in the possession of a poorly defended man.

23. Cory, Rise of South Africa, p 35.

MacMillan, Bantu, Boer and Briton, p 27

24. Milton, Edges of War, p 28

25. J. Meintjies, SANDILE, Cape Town: Cape and Transvaal Printers, 1971, p 46. Ndlambe was recalling the event of having acquired the land through was with amaGqunukhwebe. Whether

this was his only right however is something questionable.

26. Shula Marks, "South Africa" Great Britain: History Today  
Vol 30, January 1980, pp 7 - 12

27. Peires, Causes and Development of the frontier war of  
1818 - 19, B.A. Hons. dissertation, University of Cape Town  
1971, p 1

28. Peires, HOUSE OF PHALO, P 59

29. Geen, Making of South Africa, p 37

30. MacMillan, Bantu, Boer and Briton, p 33

31. Milton, Edges of War, p 59

32. Ibid., p 59

33. Peires, NXELE, NTSIKANA and the origins, p 53

34. Richard Elphick, The shaping of South African Society,  
London; Longman Penguin, 1979, p 315

Peires, "NXELE, NTSIKANA and the origins", p 53

35. Milton, Edges of War, p 60

36. Ibid., p 59

37. Cory, THE RISE OF SOUTH AFRICA, P 369

38. G.M. Theal, History of South Africa since 1795 Vol I  
London: Swan Sanneschein, 1908, p 192.
39. Ben Maclellan, A Proper Degree of Terror, Johannesburg:  
Ravan Press, 1986, pp 17 - 22.
40. Milton, Edges of War, p 60.
41. John Graham, E.E. Index, Vol 3 No. 33, Archives, Cape Town.
42. D.F.C. Moodie, The History of the Battles and Adventures in  
Southern Africa, 2 Vols Cape Town: 1888, p 185.
43. Theal, History of South Africa, p 196.
44. T. VanderKemp, Entry of 25 December 1799 in diary of 1806.  
Demonstrated a close relationship between Ngqika and de Buys.
45. Peires, NXELE, NTSIKANA and the Origins p 53
46. J. Graham no address, 26 February 1812
47. Milton, Edges of War p 65.
48. Peires, NXELE, NTSIKANA and the origins, 54.
49. What witchcraft or iinyanga can do for either an individual  
or community depends on the inclination of the parties involved.  
The client or patient needs to declare at some point his/her  
confidence in the inyanga.

50. Peires, NXELE, NTSIKANA and the origins p 54
51. MacLennan, A Proper Degree of Terror, p 186
52. The difference Ngqika had with Wiston Churchill reputed to be the originator of the saying is that when the time for war came, latter did a thorough job.
53. J.A. Nxumalo, "Christ and Ancestors in the African World" South Africa: Journal of Theology for Southern Africa No. 32, September, 1980, p 4
54. Peires, HOUSE OF PHALO p 72.
55. Peires, "NXELE, NTSIKANA and the origins", p 55. It was not spiritual experience alone which qualified a person as a diviner. The initiate had to be qualified as such established diviners, and his subsequent performances and deportment had to conform to the expectations of his public.
56. T.R.H. Davenport, SOUTH AFRICA, Johannesburg: MacMillan Publishers, 1977, p 5.
57. G.N. Zide, "The religious Cosmology of the Xhosa", South Africa: Seminar at Fort Hare University, June 1985 p 6. "The Spirits (Ancestors), it is believed, hold their own unseen assemblies (inkundla) at the cattle - kraal where women are not allowed, since they are required to avoid this place respectively as their fathers, fathers - in - law and great - greatfathers lie buried here".

58. Peires, "NXELE, NTSIKANA and the origins" p 55
59. Jane Sales, Mission Stations and the Coloured Communities of the Eastern Cape 1800 - 1852, Cape Town: A.A. Balkema, 1975, p 6.
60. The Kairos Document, Third Impression November 1985.

## CHAPTER 2

## LAND AND RELIGION AMONG AMAXHOSA

In this chapter the relationship between land possession and the religion of amaXhosa is investigated. There is an underlying assumption here that the religion of amaXhosa was deeply involved with matters of land ownership. Land was central to the religious life of the people. For that reason it was inevitable that religious structures should collapse at the point where amaXhosa had more and more of their land confiscated by colonists. Accordingly, attempts by some of amaXhosa to maintain an attitude of resistance to the Western form of Christian religion became a political issue in so far as emphasis was on preserving the land which was conceived as belonging to izinyanya (ancestors). Nxele whose ministry and life form a major part of this study provided religious reactions to such forces as had as their objective the wrenching of land from amaXhosa of the Eastern Cape. It is therefore an assumption behind this study that in rising to oppose what Nxele stood for, Ntsikana was ultimately working against the interests of the nation's izinyanya. These were considered the real custodians of the land.

It is clear that the taking of land from amaXhosa by colonists as happened in the latter part of the eighteenth century, was experienced as devastating psychologically. The dignity as

well as identity of amaXhosa were severely affected where their sheet-anchor of self confidence was snapped. According to Moorcroft, the 'Europeanising of Africans by way of destruction of all their institutions caused those people an inferiority complex'.<sup>1</sup> The process presented as progress, had suggestions that everything peculiar to those people was inferior, worthless and a hindrance to progress'. AmaXhosa were in this respect turned into marginals. In the words of Brueggemann, inevitably such people became a people with a 'homeless sort of mind.'<sup>2</sup> It was as amaXhosa were wallowing in this state of disorientation that they were assailed by yet another force in the form of the Christian religion. Missionaries had tended to draw their converts among marginal groups.<sup>3</sup> It is possible to account for the highest number of amaNgqika converts in terms of marginality, something that affected even their chief, Ngqika. Ntsikana an umNgqika convert was up to the time of his death at Thwathwa without a real home. Both his enthusiasm for Western Christianity and his positive attitude to missionaries are possible to account for in terms of marginality.

#### PROBLEMS OF HISTORIOGRAPHY:

It is worth acknowledging here that an abundant amount of research has been done on the history of the Zuurveld. A number of theories have been offered as explanation for the ceaseless conflicts between the East Cape Frontier colonists and blacks of the early nineteenth century. There has been no conclusive agreement among a number of the theories for the way each has been influenced by some subjectivity on the part of the researcher. What the position is in this regard is accounted for by Shula Marks who had said: "In a society as deeply



divided as that of South Africa, by contrast, the past is not simply some neutrally observed and politely agreed set of 'facts'. It is a series of fiercely and indeed at times obsessively contested myths".<sup>4</sup> For a long time the conflicts of the Eastern Cape were explained by historians in terms of the predatory nature of amaXhosa. The assumption here was that amaXhosa had emerged as thieves of colonial cattle. Theal and Cory are the leading advocates of this view.<sup>5</sup>

There has been another school of thought led by MacMillan.<sup>6</sup> According to his view the question of land possession and ownership had been the bone of contention in all the disputes between the colonist and amaXhosa of the early nineteenth century. The clashes experienced on the East Cape Frontier have been accounted for in terms of conflicting attitudes to land rather than simply defined areas as belonging exclusively to certain individuals, amaXhosa conceived of land as being communal property. Among amaXhosa land belonged not to an individual or family but to the chief who held it in trust on behalf of izinyanya. This conviction among amaXhosa determined that they should disregard boundaries as set by the colonists. The constant crossing of the Fish river by ama-Ndlambe who refused to give up the Zuurveld to the colonists can be better explained in terms of loyalty to izinyanya rather than war mongering. AmaXhosa were not being deliberately provocative. They were observing some of the terms of

their religion. It was for this reason that the religious rather than the political nature of leadership was emphasised at that time.

There has been a third dimension to the discussion of the causes of the conflict between the colonists and amaXhosa. As a shrewd justification for the white man's position of power and rule in the contemporary Republic of South Africa, it has been argued that Bantu-speaking inhabitants are relatively recent arrivals in the sub-continent.<sup>8</sup> Further according to this view the advent of Bantu-speaking inhabitants barely predates that of the Europeans in the mid - seventeenth century. While the invasion of the South African hinterland from the Cape is described in terms of adventure, exploration and discovery, amaXhosa were part of the waves of migration by tribal groups fleeing from the Zulus. The 'Mfecane' is what was compelling them to move towards the Cape.

The curious coincidence of the arrival at the Cape of the colonists at the same time as black inhabitants has been defended in so far as the assumption about the existence of the Cape as 'empty space' stood the ground. This assumption held that up to the time that the Dutch arrived South Africa was empty of inhabitants. For example in Raven - Harts', 'Before Van Riebeck' an impression is initially made that there was no one present at the Cape when the party with Nicolaus de Graaf arrived in 1640. Yet later in the same

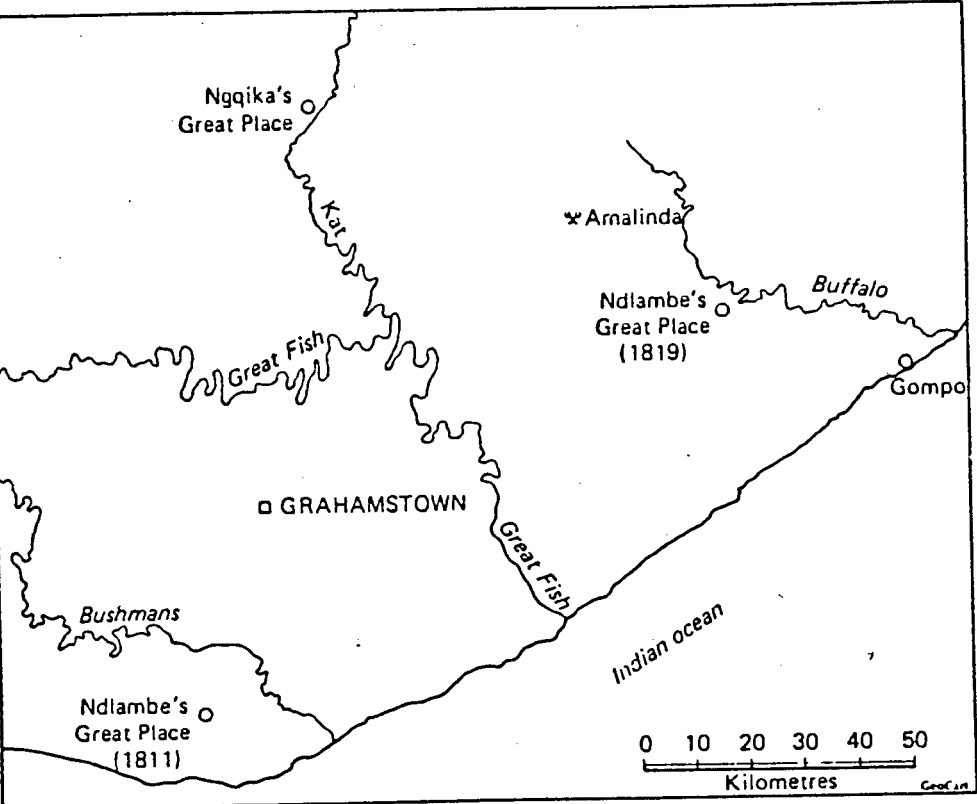
report a description is given of some people who were encountered. They were described in very negative terms though.<sup>9</sup> It is clear that the claim about emptiness of South Africa when Europeans arrived may no longer be proclaimed in unambiguous simplicity. This does not mean that the problem has been totally resolved. According to Shula Marks: "..... more sophisticated variants of these myths still permeate the history textbooks used in South African Schools and the propaganda put forward sedulously by the South African Department of Information. They have even crept into textbooks used in British schools and on British television".<sup>10</sup>

It is possible to expose the rationale behind some of the myths about existence of South Africa as empty space before the colonists arrived. The joy and happiness of suddenly entering upon a fertile valley especially after a long and hazardous journey could lead to an attitude of disregard towards any people found there. The natives would simply not be taken into account and that in a number of respects. We have an example here in what happened to the people who inhabited the North American continent when European colonists arrived. They were excluded from participating in the dominant religious - political systems for they lacked in Christianity and civilization. As one missionary said, it is necessary to 'civilize Savages before they can be converted to Christianity, and that in order to make them Christians, they must first be made Men.'<sup>11</sup>

Having convinced themselves that native inhabitants were not there when they arrived, Europeans began to feel at home in their position of power. Andries Stockenstrom a government official maintained the denial that the Zuurveld, the area west of the Fish river did not belong to anyone.<sup>12</sup> This attitude of negation of prior occupation of the territory by blacks meant that the land confiscated from amaXhosa could be labelled 'Ceded Territory' or 'Neutral Belt'.<sup>13</sup> As they had convinced themselves that the land belonged to no one, European colonists felt they had a right to do so as they pleased. Thus more and more of the land of amaXhosa was annexed in this fashion. Meantime the colonial governors, all of whom were professional soldiers, had a total disregard for what happened to amaXhosa at the time when the latter group was being colonised. No attempt was made on the other hand to discover what the implications were for amaXhosa in this whole venture. To the same sense of being lost, displaced and homeless that Europeans were fleeing, they were forcing amaXhosa.<sup>14</sup>

An attempt is made here to represent something of the black man's experience at the point where he lost his land to others. It is clear that this same attempt shall involve a re-interpretation of history. History will in this manner be viewed from the point of view of the blackman.<sup>15</sup> Already there is an admission by a number of European historians that

the semantics of being a deprived community can best be described or recovered by blacks themselves.<sup>16</sup> This is not to suggest that Western historians who are sympathetic cannot help towards sorting out things in this respect. Bundy for example has noted that some scholars have tried to write corrective history.<sup>17</sup> People have tried to replace the pro-settler complacency in the writing of history. Even there, it must be conceded that the recorded South Africa history is about European heroic adventures and pilgrimages. There is an excitement as the European student writes about victorious ventures of his ancestors. To a large extent the popularity that Theal and Cory have enjoyed has been influenced by this tendency in emotional disposition. Certain historical facts have been preferred for the manner they have served as justification for certain myths. These same myths have in turn justified adherence to certain arrangements and order by contemporary society.<sup>18</sup> It may be added here that there has been a tendency for myths preferable to the dominant group to prevail, particularly in a Metropolitan society such as we have in South Africa. The not so powerful groups are usually socialized into an acceptance of those myths that are in keeping with the whims of the dominant group. The status quo might even opt for indoctrination where the myths offered failed to be convincing. In the face of a resistance that has always been a guarded feature of South African life, indoctrination has not been able to thrive unchallenged though.



Geo(art

The AmaNdlambe Great Place Changing location due to pressure by Colonists

# AMAXHOSA AND THE LAND WEST OF THE FISH RIVER:

For our understanding of the history of the Eastern Cape and indeed South Africa we turn to findings by archaeologists, linguists and anthropologists. It is true to say that an appeal to these disciplines, something that is being done more and more by social scholarship is yielding valuable material. Some of the available information has made it possible for a certain school of historians to assemble a picture of South Africa's past that was dramatically at variance with the official version.<sup>19</sup> For example research by archaeologists on sites dated to the last couple of thousand years has established the existence of agriculture settled villages iron using communities in South Africa. Covering the final stages of the Late Stone Age and the beginning of the Iron Age the period has been associated with the arrival of a new people of negroid physical character. The earliest dates for the Iron Age in South Africa go back to 1,200 years before the Portuguese first rounded the southern tip of the continent in search of the kingdom of Prester John in 1488.. Secondly, according to research by linguists there is an indication that the black people living in South Africa during the Iron Age spoke a Bantu language or languages. There have always been two language families in existence in South Africa. While Nguni has been a language mainly used in the coastlands, in the interior Sotho - Tswana predominated. Linguists refer to the language of the coastlands as used by the Nguni as the South Eastern Bantu language family.

Thirdly by indicating interactions between the Stone Age and Iron Age cultures, anthropologies have confirmed that "South Africa was not an 'empty land' even when the first Iron Age cultivators and cattle - keepers arrived, any more than it was when the first European settlers stepped ashore at Table Bay". 20

By the fifteenth century the Nguni people of the Cape had been developed enough to have chiefdoms.<sup>21</sup> They were at that same time in close contact with the Khoi Khoi. There was intermarriage among the two groups, and thus a high degree of mutual influence. Something that all these groups shared in common was the degree of value that they attached to land. There was emphasis on land as the source of subsistence.<sup>22</sup> A need was felt by all the members of the community to work in the fields. That importance of land for purposes of subsistence meant that there was an understanding of land ownership among the native groups. This is true when consideration is given to the fact that a man or household could develop only a specific piece of land. But though there was this form of land ownership, it must be pointed out that it was not the same as understood as well as applied by the Western man. AmaXhosa subscribed to a cosmological worldview that recognised izinyanya (ancestors) as the rightful owners of the land.

Cattle were highly valued among amaXhosa especially as these



were indispensable as a means of communication with the ancestors. They were for example used when sacrifice had to be offered for good rains and fertility of the land.<sup>23</sup> As families and communities increased so did the pressure for the acquisition of more land. This pressure was further compounded by the need for grazing lands. The problem to decide whether it was land or cattle that was the issue between the colonists and the blacks is traceable to this complexity.<sup>24</sup> This problem is possible to overcome when consideration is given to what happened in situations of transaction or exchange. While it was possible for cattle to be used, land which was communally owned could not be alienated either by purchase or lease. It was on this basis that no one could claim full control over any piece of land for the way that would have amounted to sacrilege. Rather it was social conditions such as sex, marital status or membership of a particular group and the traditional laws by descent and inheritance that gave an individual rights of use over land.<sup>25</sup>

The power to grant a man rights over a piece of land rested with the chief. This right was given in so far as the man was going to use the piece of land. The term used to describe this form of transaction was 'usufructory'. It was in the interest of the community to ensure that every member of the community had a plot from which to draw a subsistence. This interest went so far as ensure that such a member had the

necessary assistance not only to raise the crop but also to reap it at harvest.<sup>26</sup> Curiously cattle could be given as a gift to the chief by anyone acquiring land in this manner.<sup>27</sup> Here one had a situation where land and cattle were used as commodities of exchange, even though this was not a straight - forward business. Land and cattle therefore were not mutually exclusive. Land was as good an economic resource as cattle.

It is necessary to go further here and consider the systems of economic prestations as found not only among amaXhosa but in the majority of early societies. We observe here that prestations or contracts between individual members of a community were never a private affair. Complete prestations involved the whole clan with the affairs . . . conducted through the intermediacy of the chief. This same situation determined that if the treaty or contract was going to be binding on a plane wider than the tribe, the paramount chief rather than a minor had to be involved.<sup>28</sup>

Prestations took the form of exchange between the rich and the poor of the community.<sup>29</sup> This was one way of ensuring that even the poor man had milk for his family. Where a poor man had been given cattle to look after (iinkomo zengoma), he would be rewarded with some of the progeny of the cattle, especially if he had looked after them over a long period.<sup>30</sup> It is obvious that the poor man was, by definition somebody

with not much to give in return. This did not however mean that the rich man had nothing to gain from the transaction. There were benefits that accrued from the act of giving to a poor man in this manner, and the highest of these was prestige. A bond was created between the donor and the recipient, and in the relationship the donor emerged as the most important man, not only as far as the recipient was concerned, but in the eyes of the whole community,<sup>31</sup> and included here were the ancestors. It was for that reason that the donor was at this point endowed with a *charism* which meant that he was not in danger of being 'smelt out' for witchcraft.

Claims that amaXhosa had to land West of the Fish river have been explained in terms of contracts by Western historians. This they do with amaGqunukhwebe a nation that was founded by Kwane out of people previously condemned for witchcraft. Tshaka the son of Kwane had secured land rights in the Zuurveld from Ruiter on payment of a fee. Following hostilities between Ruiter and Tshaka, the latter was forced out of the territory. Ruiter himself was forced out of the same territory by Ndlambe who had in the meantime invaded the area.<sup>32</sup> This account is disputable for a number of reasons. Firstly it presents amaNdlambe as recently come to the area West of the Fish river. Yet it is clear that by the beginning of the nineteenth century amaNdlambe had already spread as far as George if not further. Secondly this theory serves as a just-

ification for the decimation of the Zuurveld blacks by Whites as happened in 1811 - 12. This was in so far as the claims of those people of the area could not be validated. Thirdly, the only liberal concession that emanates from this presentation is that of a claim that the Khoi - Khoi were the original owners of the land. But even in their case, they sold their rights to amaGgunukhwebe. Nor could amaNdlambe rightly claim the Zuurveld since it was by force that they had acquired it. According to Meintjies, not even Ruiter the chief of the Khoi-Khoi had the right to claim the Zuurveld as his. Ruiter who had originally come from the Roggeveld had as little a claim to the country as had the Xhosa chief, Tshaka.<sup>33</sup> Lastly it is clear that historians have been keen to provide ground for the treaty Baron Van Plettenberg made with the amaGwali chiefs. From here the question is that of making the contract with wrong people rather than the understanding of land possession. In other words the direction of the inquiry is diverted.

#### RELIGIOUS ATTITUDE TO LAND:

In her essay, 'The Impact of the Colonial period on the definition of land rights in colonialism in Africa 1870 1960', Colson made the observation that it was not to make the same claims as the Europeans that Africans have underlined the importance of prior occupation of land. According to her the first settler to transform an unoccupied waste into human habitation and cultivation was understood to have come to terms

with the power of the earth. His heirs became the Earth Priests, who were the rightful intermediaries between men and the land of the new community.<sup>34</sup> AmaXhosa as with other African groups believed in this close relationship between land and the first settlers. There was a strong belief that the experience of some of the hazards of prior occupation accounted for an acquisition of some of the not so readily available skills and knowledge. These were skills and knowledge that others did not necessarily have.

In the process of domesticating the land, it was believed that first settlers gathered control over the forces prevalent in any specific area. They developed at the same time a relationship with their surroundings, and in a way that ensured that they predicted happenings that were otherwise natural. Experience of living in a particular area enabled them to know something about the wet and dry seasons of their environment. The community had certain religious rites and rituals to perform in relation to their land. Some of these rituals were performed either by the chief or an inyanga whom he delegated. The inyanga always acted on instructions by the chief. In other words the inyanga did not allocate or regulate any use of land. His was to maintain clear lines of communication with the ancestors (izinyanya), who had to be propitiated from time to time.

In this way and especially on matters having something to do with land, the chief and inyanga acted together.<sup>35</sup>

Rainmaking was an important ceremony performed by the community prior to the planting of the seeds. Samples of the seeds were for example brought to the Great Place for a religious action that would ensure fertility. The services of a rainmaker were often engaged here.<sup>36</sup> It was by rain-fire and cloud or smoke that the rainmaker attracted the rain. Not always would it rain after the appropriate rituals had been performed.

During seasons of severe drought a need was often felt by the community for a religious ritual much more elaborate than ordinary rainmaking. The term used for that form of ceremony was 'umhlahlo'. This was a long process that began with the summoning of a rainmaker by the chief. The rainmaker slaughtered a beast in whose blood he dipped a rod with which he sprinkled the ground.<sup>37</sup> The blood which is the centre of life in African thinking was in this way offered to the ancestors. They were the people with power to cause it to rain. Rain would be expected to fall from the same day that the bones of the sacrificial beast were burned. This was three days after the sacrifice had been offered.<sup>38</sup>

If it happened that drought continued in spite of making a series of sacrifices, witches or sorceress were blamed for the stalling of the rain. It was with the witch - hunt taking place at this point that the term 'umhlahlo' was specifically

used. It referred to a gathering of a number of witch doctors who in the context of a tribal dance (intlombe) smelt out the witch or witches responsible. Any found guilty were severely punished with fire by the community.<sup>39</sup> On the other hand if any confessed even before the ceremony took place, the severest punishment meted out was that of confiscation of their cattle and land.<sup>40</sup>

Even more interesting here was what happened in the case of a rainmaker who failed to cause rain. He owed it to his profession to present himself before the chief, and there declare his failure. It rested with the chief and councillors to make a decision on the life of the rainmaker, and they had to take seriously the plight the nation was in. Two options were available to these heads of the nation. One of these was the execution of the rainmaker.<sup>41</sup> The other way of dealing with this situation was simply to spare his life and send him away, after confiscating his land and cattle.<sup>42</sup> It is when consideration is given to these risks in the life of the rainmaker that it becomes not so difficult to imagine that they could not but be genuine. At least the tensions and dangers associated with his position demanded a clear conviction as to the genuineness of his calling.

It was in matters closely related with stewardship of land that the chief had importance in the tribe. As one of his

primary functions, he determined which lands were for pasture and which were for cultivation. He regulated public access to the means of production, adjusting at the same time conflicting claims on any piece of land.<sup>43</sup> In that way the chief could interfere with the right of anyone over land.<sup>44</sup> No one could eat the harvest nor could anyone plant before the chief had performed the appropriate ritual. This meant at the same time that the chief was in a position and had power to ensure peace and tranquility among his people. This was particularly so where he had power to distinguish among seasons.

The Kraal of the chief was recognised as the place where communication with the nation's ancestors took place. It was there that rituals having something to do with land were performed. In this way also recognition was given to the fact that the kraal as the heart of African social life was the point of contact with the deceased. To be valid contracts pertaining to the tribe had to be concluded within the kraal, if not within sight thereof. This observation ensured that ancestors were fully involved in what took place. When it came to dealing with colonial authorities, as happened in the nineteenth century this procedure was ignored. Quite often the chief of amaXhosa were prevailed upon to sign treaties on foreign ground and offices.<sup>45</sup> Also a lack of any regard for the importance of the kraal of a Xhosa chief saw the colonists constantly intruding on Xhosa Kingdoms. That definitely



happened when amaNdlambe, amaGgunukhwebe and others were forcibly driven out of the Zuurveld into Ngqika's land. That situation accounted for tension in the whole of southern Africa rather than peace.<sup>46</sup> It will be true to say the region has not recovered from that situation up to the present day.

#### XHOSA CONVERTS AND THEIR ATTITUDE TO LAND

It was inevitable that the religious life of amaXhosa should be affected by colonial interference with their land. This was because of the close relationship between land and religion. On the other hand Xhosa converts experienced a conflict where it was posed as a demand that their whole way of life and lifestyle changed at the point of becoming Christians. Immediately affected by this change was their relationships towards land, ancestors and political structures where chiefs were heads. There was a desire on the part of colonially oriented missionaries to shift the primary allegiance of the converts from Kin groups and chief to a new transline and transethnic body, the church.<sup>47</sup> Experienced by converts here was a feeling of alienation especially when they were persuaded to turn their backs against their cosmological world. Missionaries defined almost everything pertaining to the traditional religion and culture as superstitious darkness.<sup>48</sup>

It is the concern of this study to demonstrate that in per-

suading amaXhosa to disregard Qamata and izinyanya whom they were taught not to see as God and intermediaries, missionaries caused harm to the whole Xhosa cosmological worldview. The shift meant that land could no longer be seen as important and decisive for all religious life. Christian religion created a dangerous division between izinyanya and land. People became rather too preoccupied with the attainment of a salvation, something conceived only in spiritual terms.<sup>49</sup> Mission stations were established by the London Missionary Society all along the frontier zone. In no time these were filled with a people whose relationship with the land had been revolutionalized. A change in their attitude to land had made it possible for them to be uprooted.<sup>50</sup> Hardly were they helped to realize that work on land and service to fellowman was worship to God.

As amaXhosa converts got more and more involved with Mission stations they began to lose confidence in traditional modes of production. The machinery that converts were exposed to on Mission stations was introduced as advanced and scientific. Implements that they had previously used were presented as inferior and primitive.<sup>51</sup> In this respect even though it may be admitted that mission stations were helpful, they nonetheless had undermining effects on the social systems of amaXhosa. Condemnation affected not only agricultural implements but important African political figures. Things became worse and severe for chiefs who had

been decided as uncooperative by the colonial powers.<sup>52</sup> This then accounts for the negative attitude of historical scholarship towards Ndlambe. Unlike Ngqika, Ndlambe chose not to observe the dictates of the colonial government.

Instances of providing water resources within the mission stations became yet another means of attack on the social structure of amaXhosa. Many recently converted men left their homes to join the mission labour forces that built dams.<sup>53</sup> These same dams became a means of attack on rain - makers. It is obvious here that the rain - maker was encountered as an enemy. Having identified him as one, it became necessary for the rain - maker to be neutralized.<sup>54</sup> Pioneers of the new Christian cosmology did not deem it necessary to enter into dialogue with the rain - maker or make attempts to understand his importance. This was very unfortunate though, especially if recognition is to be given to the importance of the rain - maker to the Xhosa cosmological world - view.

Another view of the proselytization by Christians among marginals has focussed on population migrations in the early nineteenth century. Large communities were from time to time uprooted forcefully and had to find new places of abode elsewhere. There was experienced by those communities some form of psychological disorientation. According to Davenport for instance the Mfecane (or Difaqane in Sotho) was a cataclysmic event of great formative events of African history.<sup>55</sup>

Population migrations saw a formally settled people leaving their original abode even though with no clear ideas about their destination. In the case of the Mfecane the flight was from Tshaka's power.

AmaMfengu provided a good example for what happened to a people with no land that they could claim as theirs. As a people without claims of right over any particular geographical area amaMfengu were invariably used as human buffer by colonial authorities.<sup>56</sup> Of significance here was what happened to the religious life of the refugees especially as attachment to land was no longer an issue. It became very easy to form congregations out of the destabilized refugees than it was of settled communities. There was already an established Christian congregation in Grahamstown by the year 1835.<sup>57</sup> Describing the Christian performance of those people at that time Cory claimed that they showed a great propensity.

Therefore in view of the historical events on nineteenth century, amaNdlambe and amaNgqika were faced with a very precarious situation. The threat to their land and the resulting religio - political problems demanded that reference should be made to the religious constitution of the nation. Nxele among amaNdlambe and Ntsikana among amaNgqika emerged to epitomise the religious reactions of their respective communities. For them the choice was between the traditional

form of religion and Christianity. Intrinsic to traditional religion was the centrality of land as the point of contact with the ancestors (izinyanya). Anyone aspiring to be a Christian had no option but to confess abandonment of interest in his ancestors. While Nxele adhered to tradition, Ntsikana chose the Christian cause.

When consideration is given to how amaNgqika had maintained their occupation of the land beyond the Fish River and never contested the Zuurveld as amaNdlambe did, we realise that the two groups did not experience the same severity of the threat. Secure as amaNgqika were in their homeland they failed to realize that the Western Christian religion was a threat to links Africans had with their land. They understood it as simply aimed at substituting God for Qamata and Christ and angels for izinyanya. That was a situation they possibly imagined they could cope with.<sup>59</sup> Things were different with amaNdlambe for whom initial contact with colonists had been riddled with hostility and expulsions from the homeland. The settlement of the land question became a priority in all further dealings with the Western world.<sup>60</sup> Inevitably Christianity had it as an obligation to address this very sensitive issue. The appeal by Nxele to African traditional resources meant that he should take the matters of land and ancestors seriously.

1. E.K. Moorcroft, "Theories of Millenarianism considered with reference to certain South African Movements", B.LiH. Thesis, University of Oxford, 1967, pVI.

2. W. Brueggeman, THE LAND, Great Britain: SPCK, 1978, p 1.

3. Donovan Williams, "Missionaries on the Eastern Frontier of the Cape Colony(1799-1859)" 2 Vols Ph D Thesis, University of Witwatersrand, 1959, p 267. The Fingo and amaGqunukhwebe both uprooted, insecure and unhappy groups provided the highest number of converts to Christianity. Their state determined what their attitude would be to Christianity.

4. Shula Marks, "SOUTH AFRICA", History Today Vol 3 January 1980: 8

5. G.M. Theal, History of South Africa before 1795 and History of South Africa since 1795, London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1908.

George E. Cory, The Rise of South Africa, 6 Vols London: 1910 - 1930.

6. W.M. MacMillan, Bantu, Boer and Briton, London: Faber and Gwyer, 1928.

7. J.B. Peires, "Causes and Developement of the Frontier War 1818 - 19", B.A. Hons, University of Cape Town, 1971, pp 1 - 3.

8. Marks, SOUTH AFRICA, p 8
  
9. R. Raven-Hart, Before Van Riebeck, Cape Town: Struik, 1967, p 154.
  
10. Marks, SOUTH AFRICA, p 8
  
11. H. Lamar and L. Thompson, The Frontier in History, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981, p 240.
  
12. H. Meintjies, SANDILE, Cape Town: Cape and Transvaal Printers, p 46.
  
13. Nosipho Majeke, The Role of the Missionaries in Conquest, Johannesburg: Society of Young Africa, 1954, p 22.
  
14. F.B. Welbourn and B.A. Ogot, A Place to feel at Home, London: Oxford University Press, 1966, pVIII.
  
15. Ibid., pVIII
  
16. Peires, HOUSE OF PHALO, pVIII. "The whole book would have been different if it had been written by a Xhosa".
  
17. Colin Bundy, The Rise and Fall of the South African Peasantry, London: Heinemann, 1979, p 1.
  
18. Marks, SOUTH AFRICA, p 8.
  
19. Ibid., pp 8 - 9. "In the 1920s South Africa led the way in research on early man and the Stone Age, but it has only been

relatively recently, and in part in response to developments north of the Limpopo, that South African archaeologists have begun to investigate sites dated to the last couple of thousand years".

20. Ibid., p 11

21. I. Schapera, The Khoisan Peoples of South Africa, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1930, p 26.

W.D. Hammond - Tooke, Segmentation and Fission in Cape Nguni Political Units, Great Britain: Oxford University Press, 1965, p 143.

22. C. Danzinger, The Restless Frontier, Cape Town: MacDonald, 1978, p 2. Sandile is recorded as having told George Grey that a chief's inheritance was not cattle, but land.

H. Lichtenstein, Travels in South Africa, Cape Town: Nasionale Pers Beperk Printers, 1928, pp 349 - 51.

23. It is established in the thesis that amaXhosa attached great importance to the spilling of blood as a way of appeasing the ancestors. This happens for ancestors are acknowledged as the true custodians of the soil.

24. Richard Elphick, The Shaping of South African Society, Cape Town: Longman Penguin, 1979, p 291.

25. I. Schapera, Native Land Tenure in Bechuanaland Protectorate, South Africa: Lovedale Press, 1943, p 23.



Cory, The Rise of South Africa, p 258

26. Moorcroft, "Theories of Millenariasm", p 17

27. H. Lichtenstrein, Travels in South Africa, p 353.

Elphick, Shaping of South African Society, p 301.

Schapera, NATIVE LAND TENURE IN BECHUANALAND, P 23.

28. Van Plettenberg treaty of 1778 has on these grounds been found fraudulent. It has been signed with minor amaGwali chiefs.

29. W.D. Hammond - Tooke, The Bantu - Speaking Peoples of Southern Africa, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973, p150.

30. Hammond - Tooke, Segmentation and Fission, p 143.

31. Marcell Mauss, The Gift, London: Cohen and West, 1954, p 58.

32. Cory, The Rise of South Africa, p 29.

33. Meintjies, SANDILE, P 46.

34. Victor Turner, Profiles of Change, Ambridge: University Press, 1971, pp 199 - 201.

35. Ibid.,

36. C.B. Maclean, A Compendium of Kafir Law and Customs, Grahamstown, 1906, p 107.
37. Lichtenstein, Travels in Southern Africa, p 316.
38. Maclean, Compendium of Kafir Law, p 8.
39. T.B. Soga, Intlalo kaXhosa, South Africa: Lovedale Press, n.d. p 87.
40. As in the case of a failed rainmaker, confessing witches have their lives spared by the chief and counsellors. Confiscation of land and cattle was sometimes decided an appropriate alternative.
41. Lichtenstein, Travels in Southern Africa, p 316.
42. William, Missionaries of the Eastern Frontier, p 267.
43. Peires, "Causes and Development of the frontier War", p 3.
44. MacMillan, Bantu, Boer and Briton, pp 27 - 28.
45. The Kat River Settlement of 1817 saw a number of Xhosa chiefs assembled on the banks of a river under the chairmanship of Lord Charles Somerset.
46. Majeke, The Role of the Missionaries in Conquest, p 22.
47. Elphick, Africans and the Christian Campaign in Southern Africa In Lamar and L. Thompson, Frontier History, pp 281 - 2
48. Michael J. Ashley, "Universe in Collision", Journal of

Theology for Southern Africa, September 1980.

49. Siggibo Dwane, "Christianity in Relation to Xhosa Religion"  
Ph D Thesis, University of London, 1979, pp 271 - 273.

50. Report of South African Council of Churches and South  
African Catholic Bishops' Conference on Relocations. Randburg, p34.

51. Bundy, The Rise and Fall of Southern African Peasantry, p1.

52. Peires, "Causes and Development of the Frontier War of  
1818 - 19", p 44.

53. E.P. Herald, April 1986.

54. I. Schapera, Western Civilization and the Natives of South  
Africa, London: Routledge and Sons, 1934, p 71.

55. T.R.H. Davenport, South Africa, Johannesburg: MacMillan  
Publishers, 1977, p 10.

56. The term 'ukumfenguza' has bad connotations in isiXhosa for  
it suggests the state of being a loafer or beggar. It was a  
general term rather than specific and said something about the  
state in which the new comers were.

M.E.E. Mills and M. Wilson, Land Tenure, Pietermaritzburg:  
Shuter and Shooter, 1952, p 2. In 1853 the village of  
Keiskammahoek was established. A few Europeans mainly German  
came into the district, but the bulk of land was taken up by  
groups of Mfengu who had assisted the Europeans in their struggle  
against amaXhosa. AmaMfengu were used as a human buffer against

further attack by amaXhosa.

57. Haddy to Colonial secretary on 23 October 1835.

58. Cory, The Rise of South Africa, p 27.

59. Lamar and Thompson, Frontier History, p295.

60. CO 2563 Transcript of Conversation between Cuyler and Ndlambe.

## CHAPTER 3

INYANGA: THE ROLE OF DIVINERS IN A XHOSA SYSTEM.

AmaXhosa have always distinguished between two forms of disease (or sickness) as encountered in the community. 'Ukugula' (illness) has been used of physical disorder that can be attributed to both natural factors or actions by sorcerers. To deal with this type of sickness, medicine has to be used. Problems of stomach disorder which have featured prominently in this area have sometimes called for 'ukukhutshwa kwedliso' (an operation for removing poison). Suffering from stomach disorders for example, a Xhosa will claim 'Ndiphethwe sisisu' (I am under the power of my stomach). In this sense something wrong with my stomach renders me powerless. This situation has called for an operation to be performed by a specialist referred to as 'ixhwele eliqubulayo' (the attacking herbalist).<sup>1</sup> 'Ukugula' in other words poses demands for the help of inyanga to be sought. The designation used on that expert has significance especially where attention is given to the way he executes his task. Poison is attacked and taken out and not simply smoothed down.

The second category of disease has been referred to as 'Ingulo' or 'Inkathazo'. Whereas with the first form of sickness reference to the affected part of the body was enough to indicate something physically wrong, it could not be so

with the second. For example things could not be simply described as 'unentloko' (literal translation: 'he has a head').

If somebody was said to have 'ingulo' (referring to a state or condition) reference here was to the relationship the individual had with izinyanya (ancestors).<sup>2</sup> Describing somebody as sick in this manner, it has been possible for amaXhosa to report matters saying, "uzibani uyathwasa" (that person is being initiated or divinized) or "uzibani unentwaso" (that person has divination tendencies or has all the signs of being on way to divination). The important point to underline here is that of a recognition as far as this second form of sickness is concerned, that the 'izinyanya' (ancestors) initiate the process. 'Izinyanya' issue the invitation to whomsoever they favoured. What the community does by its recognition is to affirm what ancestors have already started.

There is recognition among amaXhosa that the line of division between these two forms of disease may not be rigidly maintained. This is in so far as physical sickness (ukugula) may serve as a symptom of something much deeper.<sup>3</sup> The patient may require a spiritual form of healing. Even where medicine is used ancestors are prevailed upon to lend their support. This happens because ancestors are recognised as the ultimate source of knowledge about medicine. They divulge information about the most appropriate medicine to use on a particular situation. In this manner ancestors are involved in all

situations of healing, whether physical or spiritual. Not every condition of 'ukugula' could be attributed to witchcraft or sorcery.<sup>4</sup> Sometimes ancestors who are otherwise benevolent and protective towards kinship turn to 'imishologu' and may be responsible for a disaster in a family.<sup>5</sup> According to this view ancestors may, if female, cause kinswomen to have problems of child birth. A male ancestor has the capability to affect both sexes making them ill in various ways.<sup>6</sup>

#### SORCERY AND WITCHCRAFT AMONG AMAXHOSA

'Ukuthakatha' (to bewitch) or 'ubugqwira' (witchcraft) are terms used for both witchcraft and sorcery in Xhosa. According to Mgotsi there is no distinction in terminology.<sup>7</sup> If amaXhosa have reason to believe that somebody belonged to the secret nocturnal society of witches, people begin to talk of 'eliya gqwira' (that witch). They may on the other hand simply say, 'uyathakatha la mntu' (he bewitches). This very same terminology is used even where somebody was good in a certain skill, for example stickfighting. A boy who does well at self defence (ukubiya) is sometimes amicably referred to as 'eliya gqwira lomntwana' (that witch of a child). The only reason why his behaviour might qualify as sorcery is that medicine acquired from some herbalist might have been used and rubbed on the stick.<sup>8</sup> The attitude of the community towards the skilful boy is never hostile. This then contradicts according to Setiloane, the anthropological convention by which all witches and sorcerers are regarded as evil and anti-social.<sup>9</sup> Rather the suggestion that witches are born

while sorcerers are ordinary people who obtain medicines or charms in order to harm their neighbours, Hammond-Tooke confirms, are distinctions made by anthropologists.<sup>10</sup> Witchcraft and sorcery do not exist in separate water-tight compartments, but they are intertwined such that, in some instances, it is believed that one person may use both interchangeably.<sup>11</sup>

In his attempt to account for the existence of witchcraft and sorcery beliefs, Mqotsi pointed to situations of human interaction. Invariably interpersonal relationships are fraught with emotional stress and strain and disruptive conflict.<sup>12</sup> Members of social groups especially those living in proximity to one another tend to engage in competition over what are sometimes very limited resources. Evidence of progress and affluence in an environment of social deprivation, easily attracts accusations of witchcraft (ubugqwira). In situations of this nature beliefs in witchcraft and sorcery have definite social and psychological functions. They both enforce morality as well as regulate human relationships. People are prevailed upon to be kind to others as well as to refrain from boasting about their success, in life.<sup>13</sup> The stigma that attaches to witchcraft accounts for cordiality in the relationships obtaining among members of an African community. Those with power to bewitch are feared on one hand, on the other hand there is general fear in the community for any behaviour that might be interpreted as witchery.<sup>14</sup>



It has been pointed out by Mqotsi how among amaXhosa, women have emerged the most liable group to accusations of witchcraft.<sup>15</sup> In his account for this liability Mqotsi has referred to the practice of 'ukuhlonipha' (taboos) as found in Xhosa society. Among the people of her husband's family the woman is a stranger. She is placed in a awkward position of alienation whereby she is not allowed to be anywhere near certain areas e.g. the cattle kraal or where her father in law was sitted. She has to avoid certain members of the family as well as use avoidance names and language. In early days all this was further complicated by the fact that marriage among amaXhosa was patriarchal, patrilocal and polygamous. The latter involved a number of women in a competition over one man. It was here that accusation of witchcraft tended to emerge. Ntsikana's mother became a victim of circumstances in that she was accused by her other husband's wife of having bewitched her. All this happened for women in a traditional Xhosa marriage, did not have bargaining power. They depended on other people, particularly male members of their families. Mqotsi misunderstands matters of African social arrangements where he verges on making suggestions about an oppression of women in this respect. This is attributive to Western anthropological influence on the African scholar.

#### THE EMERGENCE OF INYANGA:

What has been shared so far in this chapter is background information on the circumstances that give rise to 'ubunyanga'

(divination). It is clear that situations of sickness, drought and other oppressive experiences sustained by man, have caused communities to emphasise the role of 'ubunyanga'.<sup>16</sup> On the other hand, who emerged to fill that role of inyanga were persons that displayed an acute awareness and sensitivity to the needs of their respective communities. Their vocation therefore placed them very close to the pulse of their communities in this respect. They could be relied upon to provide the most essential form of leadership especially in times of a crisis.<sup>17</sup>

Turner's hypothesis about there being a fault with every inyanga whether physiological or psychological is disputable. He claims that 'ubunyanga' (divination) is founded on the fact that iinyanga have to hit back at opponents.<sup>18</sup> Even more questionable about Turner's hypothesis is the way it presents iinyanga as imposters or agitators who, exploiting situations of unrest simply incited people using unfathomable magical powers, tapping especially their beliefs in izinyanya (ancestors).<sup>19</sup> Instead situations of need posed demands for figures of the calibre of iinyanga to emerge. In other words matters are the other way round. The communities surrounding these religious figures recognise their special capabilities to deal with some of the impossible human situations. It is into a situation of human oppression that iinyanga are introduced at divination. All the surrounding community does is to

confirm their role.

It is their involvement with izinyanya (ancestors) and ultimately with Qamata that gave iinyanga power. There is a conviction among amaXhosa that disasters such as drought, floods and warfare happen with Qamata's approval. Qamata who contains all, sees all coming (uThixo ophethe konke, ukubona konke kuseza ).<sup>20</sup> The situation obtains for the simple reason that iinyanga have a special access to the realm of 'izinyanya', the intermediaries between Qamata and his people. Iinyanga therefore are feared because of their ability and power to communicate with izinyanya. AmaXhosa do not worship izinyanya as has been suggested by others.<sup>21</sup> Rather izinyanya are addressed by the community from time to time. Access into the presence of the izinyanya is not available to all, but only to a few chosen and annointed ones. The iinyanga are such chosen and annointed people. Therefore apart from simply providing channels of communication between izinyanya and the living, it will be true to say that iinyanga provide also a link between the living and the dead.<sup>22</sup> The corporate nature of the Xhosa community where the dead continue to participate in the life of their families is affirmed by the appearance of inyanga. This does not mean that this participation of the ancestors (izinyanya) was ever non-existent. The affirmation here is of something that is recognised to be there already.

There are three points that have so far been established in this chapter. Firstly, it is situations of need and suffering that have called for inyanga to come to the fore. Secondly whether a particular inyanga had the capability to help the community, the people affected decided. Thirdly, inyanga enjoyed the support of izinyanya (ancestors) with whom he is in communion. What we need to determine at this point is what constitutes inyanga. What are the marks of inyanga? or how is inyanga made? Among amaXhosa 'ukuthwasa' is recognized as a sign of vocation to 'ubunyanga' (divination). The general attitude among amaXhosa is that anyone claiming 'ubunyanga' will have gone through the process of ukuthwasa.<sup>23</sup> According to Mqotsi, there might be scepticisms regarding power that a certain inyanga had but the possibility of 'ukuthwasa' is never questioned.<sup>24</sup> The accepted view among amaXhosa is that everybody has 'inkathazo', the difference was in the degree of the expression of this phenomenon. The example "Inyanga ithwasile" (it is full moon) as given in Kropf accounts very well for what happens here.<sup>25</sup> This is so when recognition is given to the fact that the moon is ever in existence, but not always visible. In this sense 'ukuthwasa' approaches a situation of revelation where something dawns or is registered as a new awareness in people.

The incidence of 'ukuthwasa' among amaXhosa has traversed some of the boundaries of social affiliation.<sup>26</sup> Chiefs as

well and commoners have been assailed by 'umoya wentwaso' (the spirit of ukuthwasa). There is a classical case of this happening among the royal household of amaXhosa where Gcaleka had intwaso (divination).<sup>27</sup> It is traditionally held among amaXhosa that Gcaleka having been put through his initiation by 'abantu bomlambo' (the river people) in the Ngxixoxolo river, had later emerged to be an outstanding inyanga.<sup>28</sup> He combined in himself the two roles of inyanga and chief. Some historians have for that reason used on Gcaleka the designation priest-diviner.<sup>29</sup> We are on the other hand provided with insight into the divination (ukuthwasa) of a commoner in the description of the experience of Nxele by Peires.<sup>30</sup> According to that historian, Nxele had the form of ukuthwasa associated with the forest (ukuthwasa kwasehlathini). The important point here is that ukuthwasa (divination) was not confined to people of any single social rank.

With regard to the early demonstration of the tendency of 'ubunyanga', we note Setiloane's remarks: "Destiny to the profession of 'bongaka' may be noticed in a child as early as birth. A child is born amidst or with signs which distinguish him. It may be elemented phenomena or a mark, or some peculiarity on his body..... Such propensity is encouraged by bringing the 'gifted' child into contact with activities that have to do with ritual and 'bongaka'.<sup>31</sup> One of the accepted signs for an inclination to be inyanga among amaXhosa has

been that of the child born covered in a placenta (umntwana wesingxobo). A child so born is believed to be very sensitive and may enjoy a special insight to events. <sup>32</sup>

As is the case of Gcaleka, Nxele's vocation as inyanga matured in the period following his circumcision. He began to make public pronouncements challenging amaXhosa to, 'Forsake witchcraft and blood.' This message caused Nxele to be alienated as far as his community was concerned. He was bound with a rope by the people and almost gagged. This situation changed with the intervention of a certain man named Qalanga. Qalanga had discovered that Nxele's was no ordinary madness. At the point the people coming into contact with Nxele and hearing some of the things he said were advised to respond by saying, 'Camagu'.<sup>33</sup> What is important here is that to be so addressed by the immediate group, was an indication that the people recognised him as duly divinised. They were in this respect affirming what izinyanya had accomplished in Nxele. Nxele was rooted as inyanga of amaNdlambe.

There is a variation in the 'ukuthwasa' of Ntsikana, and that becomes more pronounced when what happens in his case is compared to the experiences of Gcaleka and Nxele. Unlike Gcaleka, Ntsikana did not have the experience of drowning and disappearing in a river. Unlike Nxele, he never had the experience of spending time in the woods. Here we recall with

Mqotsi that the river and the woods were essential worlds in the cosmology of amaXhosa. Those worlds, at least one of them had to provide a point of reference in the initiation of the inyanga. Instead it has been in terms of visions that Hodgson has accounted for a noticeable change in the life of Ntsikana.<sup>34</sup> The vision experienced while Ntsikana was under the influence of Nxele could be acceptable as a qualification of being inyanga. Even though there is no extant record about the details of the arrangement, it is possible to determine that Ntsikana served at this time an apprenticeship under Nxele. This possibility is duly accounted for in chapter 5 especially where it is alleged that Ntsikana was in Ndlambeland when he had his visions. It was such a service of apprenticeship, something that Ndlambe knew about, as both the iinyanga lived in his domain at the time, that gave Ntsikana the confidence to approach Ndlambe and offer his services. Ntsikana's offer was rejected by Ndlambe because, as he himself explained, he was still listening to Nxele.<sup>35</sup> It would have been clear to Ndlambe that Ntsikana's message contradicted that of Nxele on very salient points. This possibility should not be a very strange phenomenon to scholarship.

There was quite a space of time between the rejection of Ntsikana by Ndlambe and his emergence as the practising inyanga of amaNgqika. Ntsikana was already married to two women Nontsonta and Nomanto when he started working as inyanga. This would suggest a break between the time Ntsikana served his

apprenticeship under Nxele and among amaNdlambe and his actual practice. This suggestion would not dispute Hodgson's postulation that Ntsikana was with Nxele when he had his vision.<sup>36</sup> My contention in this regard is that Ntsikana was already qualified as inyanga when he decided to cut the ties with both Nxele and Ndlambe. In Ngqikaland he came under the influence of Christian missionaries and it was due to their influence that his religious outlook could not be intrinsically African any longer.

#### APPRENTICESHIP TO A QUALIFIED INYANGA

The claims of association between Nxele and Ntsikana introduce a third form of 'ukuthwasa' as available among amaXhosa. This is through serving an apprenticeship under a qualified inyanga among amaXhosa. For information on this practice I shall on the main rely on information volunteered by an interviewee from Fort Beaufort. 'Intwaso' can be said to have begun at the point where a person might demonstrate this tendency by putting up what others thought a queer behaviour. He /she might for example isolate himself. The person might begin to say things that others find disturbing.<sup>37</sup> According to Mqotsi a person with 'ingulo' looks somewhat insane. He talks about things before they happen, and these are confirmed afterwards. A competent inyanga chosen to guide the initiate (umkhwetha) will not be disturbed by the behaviour. Instead to him it will all be evidence that umkhwetha was in communication with his ancestors.<sup>38</sup>



The other way that the tendency of 'ukuthwasa' might be demonstrated is by a blantant sexual weakness particularly where some of the community's cultural conventions were transgressed.

Dreams are emphasised in the initiation phase.<sup>39</sup> Daily, time is spared whereby both the initates (abakhwetha) and inyanga exchange information on dreams ('balawula amathongo'). The dreams are analysed and interpreted. It is sometimes through those dreams that the individual Mkhwetha's 'ubulawu' will be revealed. 'Ubulawu' is a specific herb that members of a family need to wash their bodies with in order to better communicate with their ancestors. In fact 'ubulawu' is the herb that helps the initiate become more susceptible to communication with his family ancestors. A large proportion of the time the inyanga spends with the initiates is therefore devoted to explorations whereby to find 'ubulawu' of each of the 'abakhwetha' (initiates) as well as their 'izilo' (pl. of isilo) (animals). As well as there is a particular herb to use there is attached to every family a particular animal. Families who have not had a member put through the process of divination will sometimes not make the point to discover both the family 'ubulawu' and 'isilo'.

The period of serving apprenticeship under a qualified inyanga varies from one African tribe to the other.<sup>40</sup> Even within the same tribe there is room for people to qualify in either longer or shorter periods than others. The initiate spends this

time staying with the family of the inyanga together with other apprentices.<sup>41</sup> He has it as part of his duty to render service to the master. He forms part of the inyanga's entourage as the latter goes out professionally. This exposure provides the initiate with knowledge of some of the herbs that his master uses.<sup>42</sup> While out with the apprentices, the inyanga will assume a supervisory role. If there are people to see, the inyanga will sometimes let one of the 'abakhwetha' to see them. A good performance by 'umkhwetha' such as diagnosing correctly or simply detecting a specific problem is rewarded by inyanga. He does that by putting a ring of beads around either the neck, the arms or legs of the particular umkhwetha.<sup>43</sup> Abakhwetha receive instruction and practice in the art of digging as well as preparing medicine. They also learn during this time to sing the praises of their own ancestors as well as compose music around them.<sup>44</sup>

It has been suggested that during this period of apprenticeship the umkhwetha was at his weakest.<sup>45</sup> This happens for what medicine is used tends to have cleansing as the main objective. There is a constant washing with 'ubulawu', that the initiates must need do during their service of apprenticeship. For the same reason of striving for purity by washing this time of initiation is riddled with a series of taboos many of which affect foodstuffs.<sup>46</sup> Umkhwetha lastly has to avoid people's shadows, as well paths used by the public. The reason given by my informant from Fort Beaufort is that these measures are taken to ward off obscurity in the profession of inyanga. This situation then determines that umkhwetha is isolated from the

members of his family. His visits home are restricted to such occasions as when there is a death in his family.<sup>47</sup>

The capability by umkhwetha to work independently is usually regarded as an indication of readiness for 'ukuphehlelelwa', the rite that concludes the period of training.<sup>48</sup> On a day agreed upon by the inyanga and the family of the particular umkhwetha a ceremony takes place by the riverside. Taken there by the inyanga in the company of his family and friends, the new inyanga undergoes a ritual which confers on him the status of a fully — fledged inyanga.<sup>49</sup> The occasion assumes the form of a thanks giving ceremony whereby certain offerings are made to the people of the river (kubantu bomlambo). These will be offered such articles as tobacco, Kaffir beer (umgombothi) and certain portions of meat. <sup>50</sup> 'Uphehlelo' is otherwise a very happy occasion with singing and dancing. Even though the ceremony on the riverside used to last days, it has now been confined to a few hours. Everybody present joins the senior inyanga as he commends the younger man to his ancestors. They are implored to take the new inyanga into the protection and guidance.<sup>51</sup> Izinyanya (ancestors) will be given a much intensive attention later in the thesis. It will be in association with land that they will be examined.

Apart from the claims about an influence that Nxele wielded over Ntsikana while the latter lived among amaNdlambe, we are

not able to establish whether Nxele finally saw Ntsikana through the ceremony of 'ukuphehlelela'. There are a number of reasons why such an entry was never made in the annals of history. Firstly, it is possible that Ntsikana did not qualify even though he had spent time with Nxele. If that happened, it would not be strange because that was a common thing to happen to a number of apprentices. In a number of cases attempts to put some of the candidates into contact with their izinyanya simply failed.<sup>52</sup> This happened because their actual 'bulawu' or 'isilo' could not be established. The second and even more plausible reason for the omission of the record could be that of saving Christians an embarrassment in this regard. White Christians would rather highlight the good and positively Christian qualities in Ntsikana than admit the reality that Ntsikana was once part of African religious tradition.<sup>53</sup> In my research I encountered a number of cases where before or after the Christian baptism in church, the family would have performed the ceremony of 'imbeleko' for their child. By that ritual the child is duly commended to 'izinyanya zekhaya' (family ancestors) by a senior member of the family. The church persists in its disregard of such practices. This is true also of Christians who suddenly display tendencies of 'ukuthwasa'. The church simply ignores them. Even in the case of Ntsikana we are happier when things Christian are emphasised about him, and not any pagan "trivialities" which embarrass.

#### DIFFERENT CATEGORIES OF UBUNYANGA

According to Soga there are in existence among amaXhosa no fewer than seven categories into which iinyanga are classified. These

are Elokuvumisa, Elentlombe, Eliqubulayo, Ixhwele, Itola, Elemvula and Idorho. This classification is mainly based on the kind of function the incumbent is best qualified to render. <sup>54</sup>

Elokuvumisa; An inyanga that is so categorised is in the first place ordinary. He is a general practitioner who somewhat does the initial undertaking of detection if it is a matter of locating lost stock or property. When it comes to 'ukugula' or 'ingulo', he offers his diagnoses of the cause. The 'inyanga' derives the designation 'Elokuvumisa' from the way he conducts his business of detection or diagnosing. He appeals for the support of his clientele whom he implores by saying "Vumani"! Clapping their hands they reply, "Siyavuma!". There is singing by the whole assembly at certain points of the proceedings.

'Ukwombelela' is a special term used to describe all that happens here. (Ukwombela refers to the clapping and singing in combination). <sup>55</sup>

Elentlombe: This category of iinyanga are sometimes referred to by a different name 'izanusu'. The iinyanga that are in this category are specialists with power to 'smell out' witches. Their extra ordinary skills are recognised by the inyanga who makes a point to requisition their services from time to time. 'Intlombe' is used by dancing by a member of iinyanga with people singing and clapping. The occasion sometimes attended by feasting is usually observed in order to avail the specialist to smell out or simply sought out cases that are baffling to the ordinary inyanga. The acquisition of the skill of

'smelling out' does not require apprenticeship. It is a gift that inyanga gets directly from izinyanya.<sup>56</sup>

Ixhwele: According to Soga, the ixhwele is not strictly speaking in the same category as iinyanga.<sup>57</sup> He further argues that ixhwele's is not a religious profession. His main task is that of dispensing medicine. According to G.M. Setiloane all 'ngaka' receive power and insight from MODIMO through the ancestors. What Soga says about 'ubuxhwele' as not religious is therefore questionable. Rather Setiloane rightly states that the first 'ngaka' of this type obtained his knowledge from MODIMO.<sup>58</sup> What Setiloane knows as MODIMO is what is to Soga Qamata. In other words in so far as amaxhwele share in a knowledge that has its source as God, they are religious.

Eliqubulayo: This type of inyanga is famous for extracting poison especially from the stomach of a patient. The extraction is sometimes done by biting against the side of the stomach of a patient. The stuff that is then removed from the stomach of a patient is referred to by special name, 'isidlanga'.

Itola: The inyanga of this category is sometimes called a war-priest or war-doctor.<sup>59</sup> He assumes a position of importance second to that of the chief in times of war. Apart from acting as chief advisor to the chief, he also has the duty of supplying the soldiers with 'imithi' or 'ingcambu' for their protection. The tree specially favoured for this purpose is the Plumbago Capensis (umthi wamadoda). That tree is believed to have the capacity to 'tie up' the enemy.<sup>60</sup> The doctoring of

the army for purposes of protection is called uku-khafula (to make invulnerable).

Elemvula: Here the inyanga has power to control rain. He both causes as well as stops rain. The rainmaker, as he is called by anthropologists, is tribal in his operations. This means that rather than being available to be used by individuals, he is used by the whole tribe through the chiefs.<sup>61</sup> His position receives prominence in terms of drought. In the past there were dangers in this category in that if it totally fails to rain the inyanga was put to death by the community. .

Idorho: This is an all-rounder who is able to attend to almost every kind of sickness. He serves as either ixhwele who supplies medicine or itola who provides medical protection for the army.

#### THE ATTITUDE OF WESTERNERS TO INYANGA.

From the foregoing discussion, as well as examination of the various categories into which the profession of inyanga was divided, we are enabled to conclude that iinyanga occupied a very important religious role in the life of amaXhosa. The multifunctional nature of the office makes demands for every aspect of Xhosa life to be explained with some reference to inyanga. They are in that sense the kingpins of all African Community life. <sup>62</sup> The inyanga's role was the central point around which all the religious life of amaXhosa turned. This attitude of reverence to the incumbents of this role was drastically tempered with by Westerners on coming into contact

with African culture for which they did not have much regard. The inyanga continue to be undermined up to present day. Not only in the hands of foreigners do they suffer but even among their own kin. Rather the iinyanga have been presented as thieves keen to fatten themselves on stock obtained by devious means from anxious clients.<sup>63</sup>

Sinister suggestions have been made by scholars about the kind of patronage iinyanga tend to have among Africans. According to this view, iinyanga have recognition where there was acceptance of a cosmological world that was ordered by dreams and visions, signs and omens, the fear of witchcraft and sorcery and the manipulation of medicines and magic.<sup>64</sup> Their clientele have been presented as living in a world riddled by fantasy. Otherwise the modern Westerners find it hard to account for the influence the profession continues to enjoy. Later in the study it will be demonstrated how in the encounter with missionaries the profession of inyanga came up for some particular attention. The rainmaker sector was put under tremendous fire in this regard.<sup>65</sup>

As part of the African theological package there have been strives recently to work for a better understanding of Christ the healer by an exploration of the traditional healer, 'ubunyanga'. It has been discovered that there is a link between what Christ does and what the African traditional healers are



working towards. It is becoming more and more clear that until such time as Christ was presented in terms that were traditional rather than simply Western, the African will find it hard to cope. Concurring what Setiloane and others have been pleading for, Pobee has gone on to claim parallels between the Akan healer and Jesus. Healing in Akan has otherwise always been linked with the power of the Supreme Being. It is within that framework that the miracles of Jesus should be explained to the Akan Community. <sup>66</sup> We have already observed how amaXhosa and the Sotho - Tswana had similar beliefs, MODIMO and Qamata being the source of power. Thus in spite of the problems that Western scholars have with inyanga, a claim is made in uncompromising language that the traditional healer has supplied the primary paradigm for an indigenous Christology since the earliest days of Christendom in Africa. <sup>67</sup>

#### IINYANGA ESTABLISH DIVERGENT RELIGIOUS REACTIONS:

Writing on the subject of 'ukuthwasa' as found among amaXhosa of the Eastern Cape, European anthropologists have explained matters in terms of reactions to Western values. A research done in Grahamstown by Manton Hirst for example revealed how the African bewildered by interaction with western culture had resorted to 'ukuthwasa'. <sup>68</sup> There is sometimes added here a suggestion that blacks, having failed to compete against white counterparts in the modern technological arena, emphasised religion. There is a snag with this type of hypothesis and that

is in its failure to account for the presence of the phenomenon among amaXhosa, and that long before Whites came. For example the 'ukuthwasa' of chief Gcaleka in the eighteenth century could hardly be accounted for in these terms. This suggestion rather borders on being evidence of an arrogance that denies to Africa religiosity before the advent of western culture.

The religious reactions of the nineteenth century among amaXhosa can be explained in terms of 'ukugula'. The term, as stated earlier on, was understood by amaXhosa to refer to occasions of sickness. The understanding was that, while it could be accepted that 'ukugula' could be used of physical disorder whether natural or caused by sorcers, it was at the same time acknowledged that there was a deeper spiritual dimension. Instances of disorder posed demands for matters pertaining to the relationships with ancestors to be reviewed. And this is a dimension that has not been given its due attention by western anthropologist or theologian, perhaps for its elusiveness as an undertaking, particularly to foreigners.

It is not so much the bewildering nature of the Western culture with all its sophistication that is encountered as a problem by the black man, but its hostility towards him. A situation of 'ukugula' (disease) was created in the Eastern Cape not so much by the presence of the White man, as by his tendency to threaten the very existence of the black. This happened as

boundaries were drawn by whites with no reference to existing African structures of authority. Alienation was experienced by blacks at that point where they were excluded from the land of their fathers. Loyalty to ancestors (izinyanya) rather than simply vengeance on whites, was what therefore inspired the struggles for liberation. It was the ancestors on the other hand who took the initiative and selected the iinyanga to lead the community in its struggles. Having placed the iinyanga in a prominent position of spiritual influence, Qamata reserved the right to chastise them when they were disloyal, something he did through the local community. We have the example of what happened to a rainmaker who failed to influence rain. He was executed by the people. For almost the same reason Nxele would not have escaped the scrutiny of the nation. If anything was wrong with him, amaXhosa would have dealt with him accordingly. Not even at the present time have amaXhosa found fault with Nxele. Significantly, it has been European historians and theologians that have subtly discredited Nxele.

Having identified the problem with which iinyanga were faced, there remains a need for us to account for their divergent responses. For rather too long we have depended in this regard on the assessment of Nxele and Ntsikana from an external European position. A selective use of terms in the descriptions of Nxele and Ntsikana has seen them presented one as revolutionary and the other as evolutionary. It is when the

evaluation is from a position very much influenced and informed by African tradition that we are enabled to appreciate the reasons for the real problem here. When it comes to matters of a religion of any people, it is not simply with external factors that people are dealing. We are dealing with matters of depth, and therefore personal. Here we need to point out that part of that depth-personal package to umXhosa are Qamata and izinyanya. This conviction about this realization depends not on preaching, rather it is part of being umXhosa to accept these matters. Therefore as far as Nxele was concerned the use of the term Qamata had to be retained for its closeness to the soul of umXhosa. Not even in strives for a harmonious reconciliatory Christian situation must there be a compromise on Qamata. Putting across this same point while arguing for African theology, Setiloane said:

"In spite of one hundred and fifty years of Missionary opposition, the basis of a marriage acceptable in Sotho - Tswana society is still traditional, even though the extra 'frills' of legitimation according to whatever custom - legal forms, the trousseau, the church and confetti - may be added.....

Inspite of missionary insistence that marriage is a contract between a 'man and a woman' and that a man shall leave father and mother and go to his wife', Sotho - Tswana marriage has remained a communal concern. Inspite of urbanisation and industrialization,

resulting in the splintering of the family, it is still considered proper behaviour that the daughter in law spend some part of her marriage life with her mother in law and the groom's family in order to be oriented or broken in".<sup>70</sup>

What needs to be added is that what is true here of Sotho-Tswana marriage applies also in Xhosa culture. This is true of the preference of the term 'Qamata' to 'Thixo' especially in situations of a national crisis.<sup>71</sup>

If ever the term 'revolutionary' could be used of the religious outlook of any of the two iinyanga, it would be of Ntsikana rather than Nxele. Even though the argument has been put forward that Ntsikana did his best to adapt Christianity to an African situation, it must be admitted that his religious stance and outlook were very undermining to African culture. Ntsikana was part of a Western Christian religion that was designed to cause a subversion of African culture.

Commenting on the conversion of Ntsikana which she saw as happening in two stages, Hodgson said: "It is our contention that Ntsikana moved from traditional religion to Christianity in two stages. The first followed his conversion and incorporated the relation to a 'God' rather than the ancestors without it being clear how much this was 'God' as understood in the Xhosa tradition and how much the concept at this stage owed the Christianity. The second stage followed on from the establishment of Williams' mission. During the ensuing two years Ntsikana regularly visited the station to receive religious instruction as

well as take part in the worship, so gaining a deeper insight into the Christian tradition". The gravity of this situation from an African point of view should be made very clear when later in this study attention will be given to the close relationship between 'izinyanya' and land. If Hodgson is right in her suggestion that Ntsikana's religious outlook incorporated God rather than ancestors (izinyanya), then one has every good reason to wonder as to what happened to Ntsikana's relationship to land at that point. His reverence for land as a sacrosanct commodity that belonged to izinyanya got tampered with. This change accounted for his readiness to spend the rest of his life on 'mission stations' rather than on tending his father's lands.

Therefore it is clear that the religious outlooks of Nxele and Ntsikana were diametrically opposed to each other. With the issue of 'izinyanya' very much at the centre of the dispute between these, reconciliation appeared distant. The situation was further aggravated by the attitude of the white missionary who realised quite early the dangers involved for his position where the relation between land and izinyanya was maintained by amaXhosa. Missionaries have treated with scorn any reference to izinyanya.<sup>72</sup> Their measures, of punishment against any who continued with the 'veneration of izinyanya' were successful only in forcing underground operations.

Finally it is clear that in the religion of amaXhosa ancestors have a significant role of importance. They are part of life among even the converted. Any reference to Deity as conceived by amaXhosa will no doubt require that izinyanya should be restored to their natural position of importance. This assertion is made here against the background of a recognition of a denial of the role of the ancestors by the Western church. That attitude of the church has only served the purpose of driving acknowledgement of ancestors by African Christians underground. According to Dwane this has only served the purpose of causing a large proportion of African Christians to live in two worlds.<sup>73</sup> While these have continued to offer sacrifice in the African traditional way the church has persisted in its ignorance of what was actually happening in African Christian circles. In fact it has preferred not to know to save itself an embarrassment.

As far as Africans are concerned ancestors are a reality. They are part of the life of the living, and for that reason Mbiti has rightly referred to izinyanya as, 'the living dead.'<sup>74</sup> They symbolise a continuity that the past, the present and future share in. In spite of all attempts by the Western Christian tradition to deny the valuable contribution by African tradition in this respect, the ancestors cult has not died, according to Mosothoane.<sup>75</sup> Instead there has been a rediscovery of the 'communo sanctorum' by Christian theolo-

gians. The stress here has been on communalism as against individualism. According to the thinking propounded in this regard, not even at death is one really alone. There is always a sense of being with others.

Recognition that should therefore be given to the way that ancestors share in the life of the living should naturally arouse a reverence where creation was concerned. Nash underlines in this respect the importance of ancestors when it comes to issues of social control.<sup>76</sup> A sense of accountability to the true custodians of the land is what would make people approach that commodity with all the respect it deserves. Our world is riddled with countless problems all because individuals seek to outclass each other in getting the best for themselves. The previous chapter which deals with land and religion has been evidence of what is said here.



FOOTNOTES

1. Gabriel M. Setiloane, The Image of God among Sotho - Tswana, Rotterdam: A.A. Balkema, 1976, p 45.
2. H.H. Soga, The AmaXosa : Life and Customs, South Africa: Lovedale Press, 1931, pp 156 - 58.
3. Both the infinitive verb 'ukugula' and the noun 'ingulu' have 'gula' as a common verb stem ("gula - dis-ease, sick).
4. W.D. Hammond - Tooke, The Bantu - Speaking Peoples of Southern Africa, London: Routledge and Kegan, 1937, p 337.
- A.T. Bryant, Zulu Medicine and Medicine - Men, Cape Town: Centaur Publishers, 1966, pp 27 - 85.
5. J.H. Soga, The AmaXhosa Life and Customs, South Africa: Lovedale Press, 1931, p 166.
- A. Kroft, Kafir - English Dictionary, South Africa: Lovedale Press, 1915, p438.
6. Monica Wilson, Religion and Transformation of Society, Great Britain: Cambridge, 1971, pp 31 - 32.
7. Livingstone Mqotsi, "A Study of Ukuthwasa", M.A. Thesis, University of Witwatersrand, 1957, p 46.
8. Ibid., p 46.

9. Setiloane, Image of God among Sotho - Tswana, p 48
10. Hammond - Tooke, The Bantu - Speaking Peoples, p 337.
11. Dwane, "Christianity in Relation to Xhosa Religion" p 35.
12. Mgotsi, "Ukuthwasa" p 50.
13. Ibid., p 52.
14. Kropf. Kafir - English Dictionary, p 133.
15. Mgotsi did his research for a Masters degree among ama-Gqunukhwebe in the Middledrift area.
16. Stephen Kay, Travels and Researches in Caffraria, London: John Mason, 1833, p 253.
18. Victor Turner, The Forest of Symbols, New York: Cornell University Press, 1967, pp 24 - 25.
19. A.E. Du Toit, The Earliest South African Documents on the Education and Civilization of the Bantu, Pretoria: University of South Africa, 1962, p 51.
20. Setiloane, Image of God among Sotho - Tswana p 45.
21. Pato. L.L.L., "The Communion of Saints and Ancestors Veneration", M.A. Thesis, University of Manitoba, 1980, p 77.
22. Ibid., p 95.

23. Kropf, Kafir - English Dictionary, p 438.

See also Setiloane, Image of God among Sotho - Tswana, p 205

24. Mqotsi, "Ukuthwasa", p 71.

25. Kropf, Kafir English Dictionary, p 433.

26. Both in the Transkei and Ciskei I encountered cases of highly professioned people who were forced to leave their posts because they were believed to have ingulo. A matron had to be temporary suspended from her duties in a hospital to give her time to attend to matters of being 'umntu omhlophe' (being somebody white). A Mother's Union member left the church in Mdantsane for a while in order to have time to go through some of the rituals of 'uku-thwasa'.

27. D. Moodie, The Record (1840), Reprinted, Cape Town: A.A. Balkema, 1960, p 73.

28. Mqotsi, "Ukuthwasa", p 73. "The river and the forest are two different worlds, involving a difference between the doctors associated with them, the one who has thwasa'd by the river being more important than the one who has thwasa'd by the forest".

29. John Milton, The Edges of War, Johannesburg: Juta and Co., 1982, p 33.

30. Peires, HOUSE OF PHALO, p 47.

31. Setiloane, Image of God among Sotho - Tswana, p 54.

32. 'Umntwana wesingxobo' - AmaXhosa attach importance to matters of birth. Not just the fact that one was born but how, has

significance. That one was, for example, born in Winter is usually assumed to be indicative of resistance that he will demonstrate throughout life.

33. Kropf, Kafir - English Dictionary, p 55
34. Janet Hodgson, "The Hymns of the Xhosa Prophet, Ntsikana", Ph D Thesis, University of Cape Town, 1985.
35. M. Falati, The Story of Ntsikana. A Gaika Xhosa, Ms 9063, Cory Library, 1895.
36. Hodgson, "The Hymns of the Xhosa Prophet", p 3
37. Setiloane, Image of God among Sotho - Tswana, p 205.
38. J.H. Soga, The Ama - Xosa: Life and Customs, p 157.
39. 'Amathongo' - Visions of the night where the sleeper dreams of departed relatives and holds converse with them are called amathongo.
40. Setiloane, Image of God among Sotho - Tswana, p 55.
41. At Glenmore ( a re-settlement area) near Peddie I discovered an inyanga who had three apprentices spending time with her at the same time. The two had been there longer were often sent on errands on behalf of the inyanga.
42. Setiloane, Image of God among Sotho - Tswana, p55.

B.A. Pauw, Christianity and Xhosa Tradition, Great Britain: Oxford University Press, 1975, p 18

43. It can be fascinating to note how the beads served a purpose that compared so closely with certificates and badges in the modern professional world.

44. Hilda Kuper, An African Aristocracy, London: Oxford Univeristy Press, 1947, p 164.

45. Jean Mason, Witchdoctors, Cosmopolitan, May 1955.

46. In the Eastern Cape Xhosa boys at initiation school spend the first ten days of their life at the school not eating meat and other foodstuffs. It does not need to be stated that they are warned against drinking water during that same period. These are observed strictly.

See also E.W. Smith, African Ideas of God, London: Edingburgh House Press, 1950, p 108.

47. Mason, "Witchdoctors", p 156.

48. 'Ukuphehlelela' The term has been wrongly used to refer to the Christian rite of baptism. While amaXhosa have normally used the term for the rite of completion or graduation, among Christians it is used to mark the beginning of a new life. Some of the conflict that is part of the problem investigated in this thesis originates in a misunderstanding at this level.

49. T.B. Soga, Intlalo kaXhosa, South Africa: Lovedale Press, n.d. p 85.

50. Hammond - Tooke, The Bantu-Speaking Peoples, p 104

51. Setiloane, Image of God among Sotho - Tswana, p 56.

52. Cited by my information from Fort Beaufort were cases of some apprentices who in the course of being trained simply failed to make progress. Some female novices have ended bearing children of the senior inyanga if not of fellow apprentices. In this way many ended as members of an extended household.

53. Hodgson, "The Hymns of the Xhosa Prophet", p 3

54. T.B. Soga, Intlalo kaXhosa, pp 81 - 7.

55. J.H. Soga, The AmaXosa: Life and Customs, p 160.

56. The gift of 'smelling out' may be preceded by an illness. The illness becomes the focal point at which 'izinyanya' burst into bloom.

57. Soga, The AmaXosa: Life and Customs, p 178.

58. Setiloane, Image of God among Sotho - Tswana, p 47.

59. J.H. Soga, The Ama-Xosa: Life and Customs, p 173.

60. Ibid., p 174.

61. Kuper, An African Aristocracy, p 161.

62. Turner, The Forest of Symbols., pp 24- 25.

63. T.B. Soga, Intlalo kaXhosa, p 86

"Amanye ala matutu asekho nanamhlanje, koko sezizinto apha ezi-nyangaza ebusuku zihamba emathunzini ngokoyika uRhulumente wasem-Lungwini". (Literal translation: "Some of these blantant thieves have continued up to the present day, only they have been reduced to nocturnal practitioners through fear of white government acting on them").

64. J.S. Crumpsty, "A proposed general framework for identifying and locating religious experience", Association for History of Religion, June 1982.

65. Maclean, A Compendium of Kafir Laws and Custom, p 8

66. J.S. Pobee, Towards and African Theology, Abingdon: Nashville, 1979, p 93.

67. M.L. Daneel, "African theology and traditional religion" MISSIONOLOGY GUIDE I for MSB 302 - G, Pretoria: University of South Africa, 1982, pp 55 - 78.

68. M. Hirst, "Bricoleurs, Brokers, Mediators" Curare, Vol 6 1983, p 52.

69. Rudolf Otto, The Idea of the Holy, London: Oxford University Press, 1923, pp60 - 71.

Setiloane, "Christianity and African Practice as it affects me" Forum on Christianity in Southern African Context, Grahamstown Jan - Feb 1985.

70. Setiloane, Image of God among Sotho - Tswana p 190

I.J. Mosala, "African and Black Theology" Seminar,  
Univerisity of Cape Town, August, 1982.

71. Hodgson, The Hymns of the Xhosa Prophet, pp 4 - 5.

72. Pato, "The Communion of Saints and Ancestors Veneration", p2.

73. Dwane, "Christianity and African Practice as it affects me"  
Forum on Christianity in Southern African Context, Grahamstown:  
Jan - Feb 1985.

74. J.S. Mbiti, African Religions and Philosophy, London:  
Heinemann, 1969, p 59.

75. E.K. Mosothoane, "Communion Sanctorum in Africa", Missionalia  
Vol I No. 2 August 1973.

Dwane, "Challenges to the Chruch" Outlook on a century  
Sprocas, 1973.

76. Margaret A. Nash, "The Fissiparousness of Bantu sects",  
Christian Unity Essay Competition, Rhodes University College,  
October, 1949.





F. T. I'ons      Nxele the Xhosa Warrior

## CHAPTER 4

NXELE AS INYANGA OF AMANDLAMBE

Nxele is a unique black figure in the history of the early nineteenth century Eastern Cape. He emerged as inyanga of amaNdlambe at a time of an increasing socio-political conflict between blacks and whites of the Cape. In 1778 the Fish river had been declared the boundary between blacks and whites. The implication of this colonial arrangement of segregation was that all blacks living West of that river were illegally resided. There were expulsions of amaXhosa from the Zuurveld in 1812. Added as a pressure was missionary work that whites were at this same time conducting among amaXhosa. In that situation Nxele led the resistance of amaXhosa to the encroachment of their land, their independence and their way of life. His religio-political activities were not confined to amaNdlambe but spread among a number of chieftainships. In this way Nxele pioneered the spirit of Black consciousness among the black people of South Africa.

The important historic significance that Nxele has for the religio-political life of the Southern African region, has not so far been fully explored by the historian. Even though there is realisation of the inevitability to give attention to Nxele, by and large this has been from a position of bias. Therefore it is the aim of this present study to rescue Nxele from the

position of obscurity to which he has been assigned by this scholarstic negativity. Conversely it will be demonstrated that Ntsikana on whom scholars have concentrated, cannot be fully appreciated where Nxele had not been restored to his natural position of importance.

Nxele was born in Ndlambeland at a time when Xhosaland was coming under stress politically because of invasions by Europeans. The black community was experiencing upheavals of one kind or other socially as they had to adjust to a new situation. More and more black families were reduced to an existence as peasants for their land and cattle were confiscated. It was in that circumstance that Nxele's father had left his home to seek employment on a Boer farm in Qagqiwa, near Uitenhage.<sup>1</sup> It could not have been an easy decision to make especially by a traditional Xhosa family. This employment of Balala by a Boer happened against a background where great importance was attached to land. In predominant thinking land belonged to Qamata eventually. Custody of that commodity was something that the living shared with izinyanya. Abandonment of home therefore had religious implications.

There was fortunately a very high mobility among amaXhosa, something that helped to ensure that the links with the original traditional home would not be severed. It was this maintenance of the contact with Ndlambeland that kept Nxele informed about the needs and frustrations of his people. Ama-Ndlambe became aware quite early of the significant potential Nxele

had as inyanga. Nxele was in this way exposed to the ambiguities of existence on a farm as labourer's son, as well acquainted with traditional rural life. Above this he inherited from his mother the gifts of a traditional doctor.<sup>2</sup> All this knowledge helped for a balance in the way the young man viewed life.. The relationship with the ancestors was thus retained through the constant visits to the land of his fathers as well as through the profession of ubunyanga.

There is a lack of precise detail regarding the identity of Nxele. This is explainable on the grounds of a reduction in the status of his family at the point where the head sold his labour to alien boers. Nxele's proper name was Makana.<sup>3</sup> The reason that that name was not used and Nxele adopted rather, has been given as that of respect for the inyanga. Nxele means left-handed, which is what Makana was. This reason becomes indefensible when it is revealed that the English, perverting a Dutch pronunciation 'Linksch', called the inyanga 'Lynx' which meant a 'wild cat'. Rather the designation demonstrated with what scorn Nxele was conceived by Whites. Instead it might be argued that Nxele acquired the name on leaving the initiation school. It was on qualifying as inyanga that he was addressed by the name. This indicates with what respect Nxele was regarded among his contemporaries.<sup>4</sup>

Two Makana families emerged during my research, one in Grahamstown and the other at Mncotsho, (Berlin). Both the families have made claims that the inyanga was their common ancestor. The problem in this connection is that while the family in Grahamstown bears the clan name, Cira, those in Mncotsho are amaTshawe. The latter claim that Makana was of royal descent. <sup>5</sup> This complication is possible to solve where there is a recognition that the name 'Tshawe' was sometimes used on an individual or family solely on the grounds that they had made some significant contribution to the cause of the nation. This was particularly so of families with the skill of burning iron. <sup>6</sup> According to this submission it is therefore true that the two families have Makana as a common ancestor. Makana had two other brothers Mfasana and Mafani. <sup>7</sup> These two lived and ended their days in Ndlambe's land near present Glenmore. It was there that Nxele's family lived at the time Vanderkemp worked in the Mankazana district. The distance between Mankazana (Fort Beaufort) and Glenmore is less than fifty kilometers, as the crow flies. Nxele's family came under the influence of the missionary. Even when VanderKemp had moved to Bethelsdorp contact with him was maintained, as the Balala family lived and worked in Qagqiwa. <sup>8</sup>

#### AS NXELE DEALT WITH BLACK AND WHITE COMMUNITIES

Living as well as ministering in a periodically dangerous area as the early nineteenth century Eastern Cape, it was important

for an inyanga like Nxele to be judged as credible by both the white and black communities. As far as whites were concerned that seemed to happen in a very natural and acceptable manner. In their view Nxele was one of the Kaffirs living on the farm. His life at Qagqiwa where as a son of a commoner, was spent as simply one of many farm hands. There Nxele had training in the sort of expectations whites have of every black, whether educated or not. Above this he had first hand experience of life in a capitalist society, where emphasis was on private ownership of property. The other crude aspect of such a society was that those that did not have means of production for their own subsistence must negotiate as best as they can with the owners.<sup>9</sup> Unlike the proletariat elsewhere, in the Cape there was no scope for negotiation by the blackman. We do not actually have a record about Nxele actually contracting as a farm labourer.

The fact that Nxele could speak Dutch points to a close interaction that he had with Europeans.<sup>10</sup> With no suggestion that the inyanga attended school, one is bound to conclude that it was on the labour market that Nxele learnt the language. The knowledge of Dutch that Nxele had enabled him to straddle across the European and the Xhosa cultures. His synthesis of the Christian religion and the African tradition became possible because of his ability to speak the language through which Christianity was mediated to the African.<sup>11</sup> For a time Nxele preached to his people just as any white missionary might do.<sup>12</sup>

He was very critical of the customs and sins of his people.

As far as the black community was concerned, Nxele had to rely on a different set of qualifications. It was as a young man that Nxele began to show signs of 'intwaso'.<sup>13</sup> He was a solitary, mysterious child, often wondering off by himself. When he grew older Nxele went to live in the bush for extended periods.<sup>14</sup> He fasted there and on occasional visits home he refused

food because, he claimed, it had become unclean during preparation through the sins of his people. Nxele would have been punished by amaNdlambe when, soon after his circumcision he began to preach, saying Forsake Witchcraft! forsake blood! He was however saved by Qalanga who took Nxele to Ndlambe. Commenting on the unclear attitude of Ndlambe to Nxele at that time Peires observes, "Whether that chief was genuinely impressed or whether he simply felt that the madman might prove useful is difficult to say, but he allowed Nxele to set up his own Great Place and offered him cattle, which were refused".<sup>15</sup> It is clear though that Nxele enjoyed at that time the shelter of Ndlambe's protection. Nxele's acceptance by Ndlambe, meant that he should be regarded with reverence by a number of Xhosa chiefdoms. It is here that the claim to chiefdom by his offspring might have originated. Indeed it was common for inyanga to establish a distinct sub-clan. Lords in a feudal system provide parallels in this respect.

Why Nxele was treated so honourably by Ndlambe was that a

discovery had been made that Nxele's was no ordinary madness. He was recognised as having 'ingulo' by both Qalanga and Ndlambe. The community was prevailed upon by Qalanga to recognise this by responding to the utterances of Nxele saying, 'Camagu!' It was significant that the community used that term, for 'Camagu' has religious connotations. Used in addresses of ancestors and iinyanga it meant be appeased or pacified. <sup>16</sup> There was recognition that Nxele was 'umntu omhlophe' (there was whiteness about him). This 'whiteness' about Nxele was not restricted to matters of 'wearing white beads' but rather said something about the condition or state that Nxele was in. He was the medium through which the knowledge (light) of izinyanya was made available to the people.

Peires argues that the above occurrences took place shortly after the Xhosa had crossed the Fish river in 1812. <sup>17</sup> This according to my assessment is not so. It was before the year 1795, and at the time Ndlambe was the acting regent of amaRharhabe nation as a whole. <sup>18</sup> When, for example Khawuta visited amaRharhabe following the deaths of Rharhabe and his own son Mlawu in 1782, Nxele was already in the role of inyanga, as well as had charge over a number of lesser iinyanga. <sup>19</sup> He gave directives as to the proceedings at the ceremony of 'ukukhuza' (a mourning by the whole nation). He decided how many cattle were to be slaughtered. Khawuta would not address the gathering of amaRharhabe until formally invited to do so by Nxele. It



was at that same ceremony that Ngqika was elected king by Khawuta. Ngqika was about twelve years of age hence his uncle Ndlambe had to rule in his place. This discussion in particular renders 1780 as the year of Nxele's birth questionable. Even as inyanga Nxele needed to be in his early twenties to be assigned this responsibility by the community. AmaXhosa attach importance to matters of age.

The other role that Nxele was in at this same 'ukukhuza' ceremony was that of 'ukujola' (the distribution of food and drinks). There are particular regulations and traditional norms to adhere to by anyone in the role. Thus the function was often assigned to someone knowledgeable as far as certain intricacies of relationships among the community were concerned. As with many other African groups, there were 'izithebe' on such occasions.<sup>20</sup> Especially on occasions of ceremonial rituals, the sharing of a table by men, women and children was something unknown among amaXhosa. For any people about whom there was lack of information as far as the organisers were concerned, a separate 'isithebe' would be arranged. There had to be equality and familiarity among any group that shared the food together. There were informal introductions among the groups to help those not so acquainted with each other. The reason why anyone was assigned to a particular group soon became self explanatory.

My point here is to establish that Nxele occupied the position of a national inyanga among amaNdlambe. In fact, provided there is agreement about the time when the national day of mourning was held, it would appear Nxele was in that role of a national inyanga among the whole Xhosa royalty. Therefore Nxele was recognised as inyanga not only among amaNdlambe but by a number of Xhosa chiefdom which included imiDange, amaGwali, amaGqunukhwebe, amaNgqika, amaMbalu. Milton attests that round about 1817, this was the time of the Kat River Conference which Lord Somerset had convened, the councils of the confederated Caffer chiefs were at the same time directed by an extraordinary individual generally known in the colony by the title of 'Links'.<sup>21</sup> He wielded a tremendous influence especially in such national events as the installations of successors to the throne of amaRharhabe. Nxele was a highly respected inyanga who wielded tremendous authority. This position of power and influence was retained by Nxele until his arrest and death on Robben Island in 1820.

Therefore, it is possible to conclude on this area that Nxele was well suited for the role he was called to play among the black and white communities of the Eastern Cape. His life on a farm at Qagqiwa had provided him with opportunities to gather some understanding of the white man. It is possible to suggest that Nxele enjoyed a measure of acceptability by whites. That of course did not mean that whites welcomed Nxele to a status

of equality with them. Nxele was yet to discover some of the distinctions that Whites made even among such as were designated brothers in Christ.<sup>22</sup> That was going to have a devastating effect on him. On the other hand, as we have demonstrated above here Nxele was very much at home in traditional Xhosa life. He was an accepted inyanga not only among amaNdlambe, but virtually among all the tribal groups on both sides of the Fish river.

#### NXELE AND POLITICAL PROBLEMS OF AMAXHOSA

The matter of Nxele's relationships as well as his dealings with Christian missionaries operating in Xhosaland in his time is the subject of a later chapter of this study. A change in Nxele's religious outlook where later he emphasised the political content of his ubunyanga, seems to have triggered off hostile reactions to the inyanga from a number of quarters. Nxele has been accused of having been an opportunist who simply exploited a situation of vacuum that had occurred because Ndlambe and Chungwa had been defeated in the Fourth frontier war of 1812. Others have seen in figures like Nxele dupes of chiefs who used them merely to gain their political ends.<sup>23</sup> The suggestion has been that even though Nxele might have originated as a religious, he had over time become a politician. So radical has been the distinction that white scholars have drawn between what is religion and what is politics. In this same spirit Pringle actually portrayed

Nxele as the initiator of the 1819 war against Grahamstown.<sup>24</sup> For this involvement in situations of war Nxele has been recalled in historical material solely for purposes of a dressing down. He has been offered as a bad example of bad black religious response to white Christian domination. This is contrary to the view pursued in this study.

As Nxele's role as inyanga is examined from an African perspective, the picture cannot but change here. Nxele was a bona fide umNdlambe. Therefore his affiliations to that tribe provided his context and sphere of operation. He shared in the socio-political experiences of amaNdlambe, and above that as an inyanga, he had the added responsibility of finding solutions to problems that his people were encountering. It was part of his responsibility however to ensure that the interests of the chiefs were upheld, and to the chiefs he was the chief councillor because he was the itola of the nation. Here it must be said how questionable the circumstances of the introduction of Nxele to Ndlambe are. Even though Peires admits that as a young man Nxele had exhibited the symptoms of inyanga, he proceeds to portray him as brought to Ndlambe gagged.<sup>25</sup> For lack of parallels in similar situations of even worse behaviour by 'abantu abanentwaso' (divinated people), this response by locals remains disputable. It has been a normal practice that someone from the community would point out that 'unengulo' or 'unenkathazo' (meaning he has been entered by imimoya - spirits). In all that Ndlambe did as

welcome to Nxele there was no ulterior motive.<sup>26</sup> Hodgson points out that Ndlambe satisfied himself as to the genuineness of the 'inkathazo'.<sup>27</sup> The Great Place for inyanga was only set up after that investigation had been conducted. According to Hodgson the treatment meted out to Nxele was similar to that which was availed to rainmakers who were patronised. . But she adds here, "..... rainmakers do not seem to have been given political status. Moreover chiefs were born, not made, and Nxele was a commoner."<sup>27</sup> This takes us back to square one as far as solving the problem of Nxele's political involvement.

It would appear that the relationship between the chief and inyanga was highly regularized. Even though inyanga had the charge of the religious life of the tribe, he acted in all matters under the aegis of his chief. There was no sense in which the role of inyanga could ever threaten that of the chief. Nxele was 'itola la komkhulu' (itola of the Great Place) among amaNdlambe. The war situation obtaining on the East Cape frontier in the early nineteenth century had posed demands for this type of inyanga rather than the others to be emphasised. . He was a war-priest with duties that included doctoring the army (ukukhafula). Nxele was also an advisor to Ndlambe and his responsibilities in this respect compared to those of a Minister of Defence in modernity. Thus the itola's charge was two - pronged. He was both the advisor and protector of the chief and people.

The chief as custodian of tribal customs and traditions acted most of the time bearing in mind the interests of the tribal ancestors.<sup>28</sup> It was the need to take cognisance of 'izinyanya' (ancestors) in the conduct of tribal affairs that determined that there should be a close cooperation between the chief and inyanga. The inyanga had expertise, knowledge and access to the realm of the living dead. But only the chief could, as the geneological senior male member of a senior lineage offer sacrifices commemorating izinyanya. Only the chief could undertake the first-fruit (ulibo) ceremony at harvest.<sup>29</sup> He opened ceremoniously the division between arable and grazing land. In both these situations there was an expression of the African traditional economic system with its emphasis on sharing

According to Richards ".....the accumulation of large quantities of any type of material goods was neither very possible nor considered desirable. The accumulation of food was not an end in itself for the chief or notable, but rather the means to build up a large following of people which was to him the highest aim of life."<sup>30</sup> On the other hand whenever inyanga performed, it was always understood that he was doing it in the name of the chiefs. This allegiance to the chief was demonstrated by the inyanga on occasions of performing tribal rituals. Now and again he would stop to 'khuz' inkosi' or 'khahlela'.<sup>31</sup> (sing praise to the chief). He might go further tracing the umnombo (geneology) of the reigning chief. The belief, whenever that happened, was that the support

of the ancestors of the nation was being invited. Feasts and ceremonies where the inyanga featured in this manner have been experienced by Africans as very dynamic.

It should be obvious that it cannot be without difficulty that umXhosa accepts what Peires appears to imply where he claims, "Thus in the years immediately following 1812, political leadership passed from the hands of chiefs into the hands of prophet - figures."<sup>32</sup> The prophet - figures he refers to in this respect are Nxele and Ntsikana. So far in Africa we are without precedents of situations where inyanga or amagqira actually ruled. Nxele enjoyed political power over Ndlambe, not in the way suggested here. He was not a political figure in that sense. In the Xhosa sense his profession however embraced all that belonged to izinyanya and eventually to Qamata, and that included the political realm of the life of his community. The welfare of the community rather than maintenance of boundaries between various sectors of life such as religion and politics, is what provides challenges for inyanga.

#### FACTORS INFLUENCING CHANGE IN NXELE

Two conflicting dates have been given for the time when Nxele began to display a militant stance in his profession as inyanga. According to one view the year 1812 was a turning point in Nxele's theological outlook.<sup>33</sup> The event of the expulsions of amaXhosa from the Zuurveld had made an implacable impression

on Nxele. It confirmed in a demonstrative manner that whites, unlike other strangers and visitors, did not wish to be accepted into existing African social systems. They sought rather to destroy these. This discovery did not deter Nxele from maintaining contact with Europeans. He became rather a regular visitor to the newly established British headquarters of Grahamstown, where he saw the Rev. A.A. Vanderlingen.<sup>34</sup> He did not turn against the whites. Rather he was inspired to seek the sources of their power. But all the same the reality of the situation was too obvious for him to ignore. The land of his fathers had been taken away. Nxele and his people had no political power.

The second date associated with a change in the inyanga is 1816. The change in Nxele's attitude is blamed on a meeting he had with Read that year.<sup>35</sup> He had taken the opportunity of a visit to Xhosaland by Read and Joseph Williams whereby he raised with the missionaries certain religious matters. According to Peires round about that time, "It became increasingly clear to him (Nxele) that orthodox Christianity as embodied by the missionaries would not accept him as an equal partner in the evangelisation of the Xhosa, much less believe on the divinity of his origins or the authenticity of his visions".<sup>36</sup> What had become clear and shattering as an experience was that whites had no respect for him as a black man. As a member of a group devoid of political power, Nxele could not enjoy



recognition and thus participate fully and meaningfully on the religious arena. Religion and politics can be separated only to the detriment of the underdog.

It was on making an assessment of the situation as it really was that according to Peires, Nxele, began to see the world as a battle ground between Thixo, the God of the whites, and Mdalidiphu, the God of the blacks.<sup>37</sup> From the year 1817 Nxele began to preach an apocalyptic message that izinyanya would return to life and help amaXhosa drive out the whites. In consultation with the chiefs of the nation, Nxele arranged a mass religious gathering to take place at Gampo Rock (near East London). The purpose was to allow for 'ukunqula izinyanya' (to address the ancestors).<sup>39</sup> At the same time the occasion served the purpose of providing an opportunity for a conscientization of amaXhosa. From this point they were to look to Qamata and izinyanya to help in their predicament rather than rely on Thixo. There was a solidarity among crowds that had assembled for some days, feasting. That spirit would not be taken away by the failure of the actual resurrection of the dead.<sup>40</sup>

About this same time (April 1817) a meeting of all Xhosa chiefs was convened by Lord Charles Somerset on the banks of the Kat River (umlambo iNgxwengwe). Even though the reason for the conference had been according to historians to end cattle - reiving which the expulsion of amaXhosa had only aggravated,

the Colonial Government declared at the conference its recognition of Ngqika as the sovereign King of amaXhosa.<sup>41</sup> This action by the colonial power achieved what it had been designed to do. All Xhosa chiefs and particularly Ndlambe saw the act as provocative. Here again the colonists thrived on creating conflict and suspicion among the tribes. Pringle says how, "The mistaken policy of treating Gaika as the King or sovereign of the AmaKosa, and paying no regard to Islambi, who was present, or to any other of the leading chiefs, who disclaimed allegiance to Gaika, was here again pursued, and contributed, there is little doubt, to increase the jealousies and heart-burnings that already existed among the frontier chiefs".<sup>42</sup> This same exclusive distinction conferred on Ngqika by the colonial government had helped increase the natural arrogance that Ngqika seems to have had.

It was as a measure of dealing mainly with Ngqika that amaXhosa formed a confederacy in 1818. The coalition which enjoyed the support of Hintsa the paramount chief of all amaXhosa, comprised of such important chiefs as Ndlambe, Jalusa, Habanna and Cungwa, the chief of amaGqunukhwebe. Nxele the inyanga of amaNdlambe who had become overwhelmed by a feeling of injustice by the colonial government became the spirit behind the coalition. Together with Dushana, the son of Ndlambe, Nxele engaged amaNgqika under Magoma, the son of Ngqika at the battle of amaLinde in October, 1818. The battle was fought near the Debe river and not far from Middledrift. AmaNgqika were defeated and Ngqika

who had sustained a severe loss of cattle was driven to the Koonap river (umlambo iKhobongaba). Pringle's comment on the behaviour of Nxele's group has importance here. "The victors did not press him (Ngqika) farther, nor was any aggression committed by them upon the colonial territory, of which the Great Fish River was the fixed boundary. There was therefore not the slightest pretext for our interference, the quarrel being entirely upon matters proper to the politics of the tribe, with which the colony had no concern".<sup>43</sup>

Unfortunately for amaXhosa the powerful whites had made a decision that Ngqika was their man, despite the fact that the latter was unpopular among his own people. In keeping with their colonial arrogance the colonists had set up a political structure of government among amaXhosa, and that irrespective of whether it was acceptable among those people or not. Finally a sense of superiority posed demands that the colonists should defend both Ngqika and the political structure they had instituted. It fell on Lieutenant - Colonel Brereton to march into Xhosaland heading an expedition comprising Europeans, Khoikhoi and some San.<sup>44</sup>

AmaXhosa were attacked, with a large number of warriors, women and children killed. Their cattle were plundered with about 23,000 head carried off by the invading force. Of that number Ngqika received 9,000 as reimbursement for losses he had sustained at the hands of the confederacy.<sup>45</sup> This situation had rendered amaXhosa desperate, especially when their important means of subsistence had been violently snatched from them.

It was in a spirit of retaliation that amaXhosa resolved to attach the frontier districts such as Algoa Bay, Theopolis, Enon, inflicting injury on farming communities surrounding the areas. Large heads of cattle were recovered by amaXhosa from farmers living along the Great Fish River. Again the words of comment by Brownlee on this campaign warrant attention. "In these attacks Caffers showed a determined resolution to recover their cattle; yet, although they killed many of the soldiers and colonists, they did not evince that blood-thirsty disposition which is common to most barbarians. When they could get away the cattle without being opposed, they made no attempt on the lives of the inhabitants".<sup>45</sup> AmaXhosa did not plunge into war lightly. They agonised over the decision which according to one of Nxele's assistants was forced on them. He said, "We quarrelled with Gaika about grass - no business of yours. You sent a commando - you took our last cow - you left only a few calves, which died for want, along with our children. You gave half the spoil to Gaika, half you kept yourselves. Without milk, - our corn destroyed, - we saw our lives and children perish - we saw that we must ourselves perish; we followed, therefore, the tracks of our cattle into the colony. We plundered, and we fought for our lives. We found you weak; we attacked your soldiers. We saw that we were strong; we attacked your headquarters; - and if we had succeeded, our right was good, for you began the war. We failed - and you are here".<sup>47</sup>

The battle of Grahastown (22 April 1819) waged by Nxele against the colonists is what influenced the use of the title 'war doctor' on him. That event is recalled by Western historians with scorn. Some of them highlight the event in historical material as a 'fatal error' on the part of black hero.<sup>48</sup> Yet according to what is reported above, the decision to attack Grahamstown was motivated by circumstances that amaXhosa were finding impossible to cope with. At the same time their expeditions on the districts surrounding Grahamstown had been convincing as to the weakness of Europeans (AmaNgesi). They were thus impelled to attack the headquarters of the British troops. That centre of European power had to be destroyed if amaXhosa were to enjoy any measure of peace. Thus Nxele using warriors from the various tribes of the Zuurveld assembled an army of between 9,000 and 10,000 warriors whom he mustered in the forests of the Great Fish River. In keeping with African tradition Nxele sent a message of defiance to Colonel Willshire, the British commandant saying, "that they would breakfast with him the next morning".<sup>49</sup>

Nxele approached Grahamstown at the break of dawn, and about seven miles away from the headquarters of Grahamstown he stopped the Xhosa army for an address. He implored izinyanya to lend their support to the campaign. He gave the warriors word of assurance of the intervention of the supernatural powers in the conflict with the English.<sup>50</sup> Various chiefs took charge of various divisions of the Xhosa army. The English who had

not believed the message of warning sent to them by Nxele were taken by surprise. According to Nxele, amaXhosa who had been acting on the instruction of Uhlanga (the greatest of ancestors) were there to avenge their wrongs. Their duty was thus to drive the English across the Zwartkops river into the ocean; "and then we will sit down and eat honey", Nxele said. The battle was meant to be decided at close combat which meant that warriors should break short their assegai.

It was at a critical point of the battle that a Hottentot army under Captain Boesak arrived in Grahamstown and rescued the English from a certain embarrassment. Boesak and his Buffalo hunters from Theopolis had the advantage of a first hand knowledge of the ways of fighting by a number of the Xhosa Chiefs. Added to the skills of firing that the British troops had the opposition to the advance of amaXhosa proved formidable. The conflict was very brief but the slaughter was great. About fourteen hundred amaXhosa were killed while many fled into the woods. There were follow up operations by a burgher militia which saw villages of amaXhosa burnt, and so their fields of maize. Hordes of vanquished amaXhosa were forced to retire and flee into the Fish River bush. Nxele was declared an outlaw by the colonial government, together with the rest of Xhosa chiefs that had engaged in the war. Not even that declaration however could cause amaXhosa to denounce Nxele.

The greatness of Nxele was displayed at the manner he handed

himself over to Captain Stockenstrom, all as a means to end the suffering of his people. He did this at Trumpeter's Drift on the Great Fish River, a place where an English army had camped. His words to Stockenstrom on this occasion were as follows, "-----people say that I have occasioned the war, let me see whether my delivering myself up to the conquerors will restore peace to my country".<sup>52</sup> He would have been conscious here of the criticism that was issuing at this time from people such as Ntsikana. Nxele was collected from Trumpeter's Drift by Colonel Willshire. He was tried in a colonial Court in Cape Town and sentenced to a life imprisonment on Robben Island. We have already noted that Nxele died a year later while attempting an escape from the island together with other political prisoners. Those people had been incarcerated for their defiance of forces calculated to rob them of their birth right, the land of their fathers.

The observation made by Pringle on the life and deeds of Nxele has importance for the present study. He said: "As regard the chief, Makanna, it is melancholy to reflect how valueable an instrument for promoting civiliazation of the Caffer tribes was apparently lost by the nefarious treatment and indirect destruction of that extraordinary barbarian, whom a wiser and more generous policy might have rendered a greatful ally to the colony, and a permanent benefactor to his own countrymen".<sup>53</sup> What Pringle has said in this regard bears reference to what

happens in the final chapter of the study. There will be made suggestions about the implications of Nxele and Ntsikana for African and Black theologies. In the same way that Pringle wished Nxele were preserved, a case will be made for the preservation of what those two theologies are about. There is a strong objection to the almost negative and belligerent attitude of Western Christians regarding those two theologies.



1. D. Cooper, "Land Reform and Rural Development in the Transvaal". Land Tenure and Rural Development Workshop.

Grahamstown November 1986 p 18

"For a very long time, most South African families had had some urban and some rural aspects to their lives. This is likely to continue for some time. The South African economy is based on labour migration, and rural families depend upon diversified sources of income for survival".

2. J. Hodgson, "A Study of the Xhosa Prophet Nxele" Prt I, RELigion in Southern Africa Vol. 6 2 July 1985

3. Milton, The Edges of War Johannesburg: Juta, 1983 p 65

W.B. Rubusane, Zemk'iinkomo magwalandini London: Butler and Tanner, 1906 p 1919

4. In an interview with one of Nxele's great grand daughters at Mncotsho on 1985 she referred to him as "usandla sokhohlo".

5. Interview with Mjuza Family of Mncotsho (Berlin) on 8 May 1985.

Thomas Pringle, Narrative of a Residence in South Africa 1835 Reprinted Cape Town: Struik, 1966 pp 294 - 299.  
Among Colonists Nxele was also regarded as a chief.

6. Marks, "SOUTH AFRICA" P 12

7. Interview with Mrs G. Ntutu (nee Makana) of Mdantsane 10 August 1985.

8. Hodgson, "A Study of the Xhosa Prophet Nxele" p 12

J.K. Bokwe, Ntsikana: The Study of an African Convert  
South Africa: Lovedale Press, 1914 p 13

9. K. Crehan, "Ideology and Practice, A Missionary Case"  
in A.V. Keroyd and C.R. Hill eds. Southern African Research  
in Progress, Collected Papers 4 University of York, 1979 p 1

10. Peires, House of Phalo p 69

Hodgson, "A study of the Xhosa Prophet Nxele" p 12

11. Peires, "A History of the Xhosa (1700 - 1833) p 135

12. Hodgson, "A study of the Xhosa Prophet Nxele" p 14

13. J.H. Soga, Ama-Xhosa: Life and Customs p 160

14. MacLennan, A Proper Degree of Terror p 186

15. Peires, The House of Phalo p 69

16. Kropf, A Kafir - English Dictionary p 55

17. Peires, The House of Phalo p 69

18. 1795 is the year Ngqika attacked his uncle Ndlambe, all in  
fear that he would not hand back the reigns peacefully.

19. W.K. Ntsikana, "Ukuvela kwamaNdlambe" Isigidimi No 22  
Cory Library 2 January 1888

20. E.H. Bigalke, "Religious System of the Ndlambe of the  
East London District" M.A. Thesis, University of Rhodes, 1969

21. Milton, The Edges of War p 65

22. Hodgson, "A study of the Xhosa Prophet Nxele" p 14  
"Nxele was well suited to interpret the new in terms of the old,  
but he only moved to this position gradually. After his conver-  
sion he was as enthusiastic and evangelist as his Bethelsdorp  
brethren, and his early teaching follows the missionary line  
with its criticism of Xhosa customs and practice".

23. Moorcroft, "Theories of Millenariamsm" p 79

24. Pringle, Narrative of a Residence in South Africa p 299

25. Peires, The House of Phalo p 69

Hodgson, "A study of the Xhosa Prophet Nxele" p 14  
"The people bound Nxele with leather thongs and tied a rope  
around his neck, saying, "You are mad". He answered, I am not  
mad. You say that people die, but they do not. They go to that  
chief".

26. Peires, The House of Phalo p 69

27. Hodgson, "A study of the Xhosa Prophet Nxele" p 15

28. J.H. Soga, The amaXhosa: Life and Custom p 156

29. W.D. Hammond - Tooke, The Bantu speaking peoples of South Africa pp 138 - 47

30. M. Gluckman, Politics Law and Ritual in Tribal Society Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1977 p 53

31. This custom of 'ukukhahlela' is maintained in both Ciskei and Transkei. Subjects refer to chiefs Kaiser Matanzima as A! Daliwonga (creator of honour) and chief Burns - Ncamashe as A! Zol'imbola (the one who shuns red ochre).

32. Peires, "NXELE, NTSIKANA AND THE ORIGINS" p 54

33. Peires, The House of Phalo p 69

"This disaster did not cause Nxele to turn against whites, if anything, it inspired him to seek the sources of their power. He spent much of his time in the new frontier outpost of Grahamstown, carefully observing the militancy and technical side of the behemoth".

34. Ibid., p 69

35. Hodgson, "A study of the Xhosa Prophet Nxele" p 19

36. Peires, The House of Phalo p 70

37. Ibid., p 71

38. Sales, Mission Stations and the Coloured Communities p 64

39. Even though the term 'ukunqula' has been adopted by Christian

amaXhosa to mean worship, it was not in the Christian sense that it originated. 'Ukunjula' meant addressing 'izinyanya' (ancestors) and making them aware of the needs of the community. They were implored to lend their support to the struggles of the people.

40. Peires, The House of Phalo p 70

"Although the expected event did not materialise, Nxele's reputation was not substantially affected".

W.D. Hammond - Tooke, The Journal of William Shaw Cape Town:  
A.A. Balkema, 1972 p 103

"Makana ordered them all to enter the water and wash, with which the people complied, but as they entered the water en massed they could not refrain from bellowing fourth the usual war yell. Makanna now informed them they ought not to have done so, and since they had thought proper to follow their headstrong will, and not histened to his directions, all was now over, and every man might return to his home".

41. Pringle, The Narrative of a Residence in South Africa  
1835 p 294

42. Ibid., p 294

G. Thompson, Travels and Adventures in Southern Africa  
Vol II London: Henry Colburn, 1827 p 343

S. Kay, Travels and Researches in Caffria London: John  
Mason, 1833 pp 153, 255

43. Pringle, Narrative of a Residence in South Africa 1835  
p 295

G. Thompson, Travels and Adventures in Southern Africa p 345

Kay, Travels and Researches in Caffraria p 257

44. Since their defeat by colonists the Khoi and the San quite often joined hands with their conquerors in battles against amaXhosa.

45. Pringle, Narrative of a Residence in South Africa 1835  
p 295

46. G. Thompson, TRAVELS AND ADVENTURES IN SOUTHERN AFRICA  
p 345

Kay, TRAVELS AND RESEARCHES IN CAFFRARIA p 258

47. Pringle, Narrative of a residence in Southern Africa  
1835 p 305

G. Thompson, TRAVELS AND ADVENTURES IN SOUTHERN AFRICA  
1827 p 63

48. Peires, The House of Phalo p 71

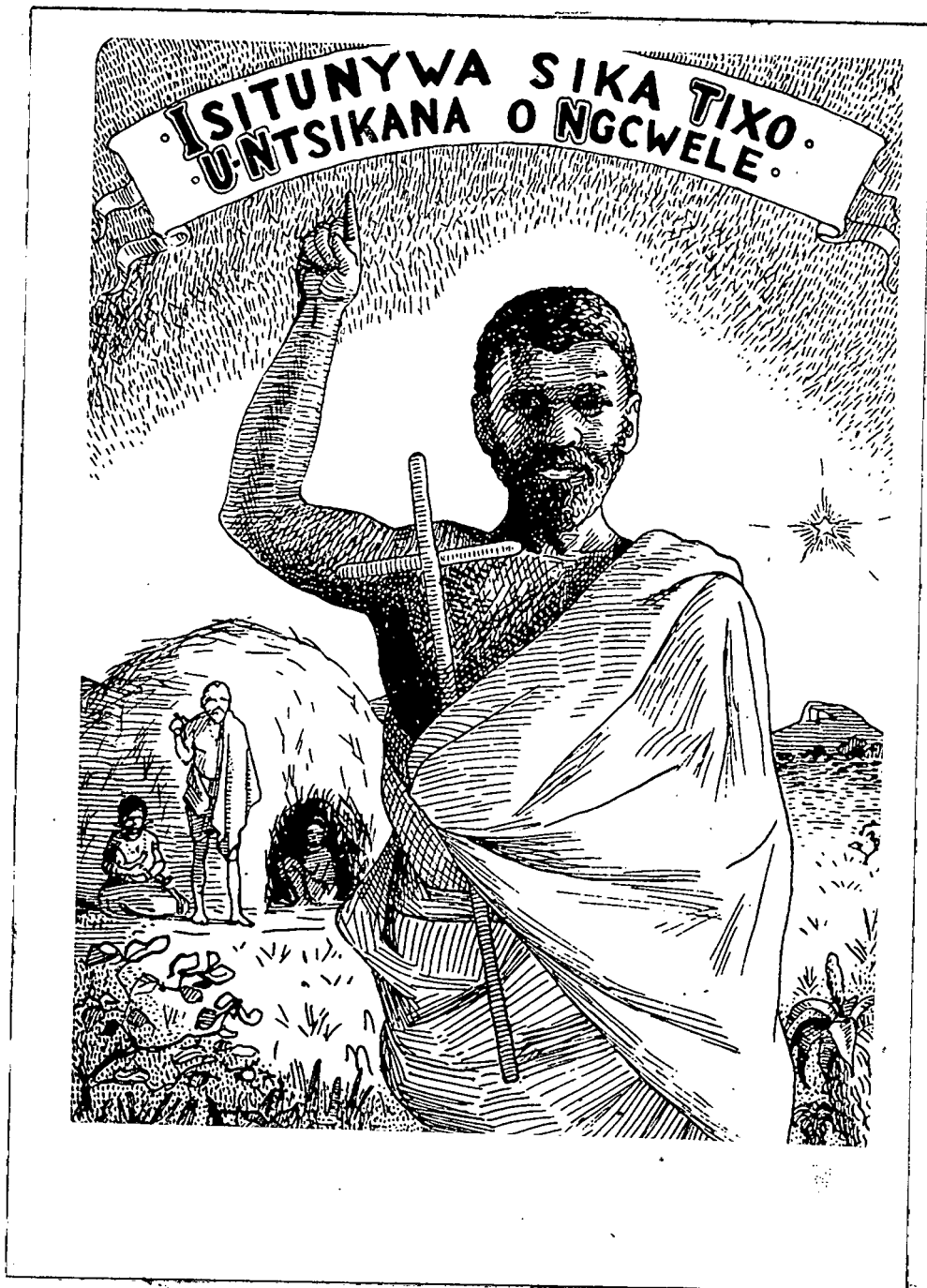
49. Ms. 14, 558 C.L. Stretch (Diary) Cory Library

50. Pringle, Narrative of a residence in Southern Africa  
1835 p 299

51. Ibid., p 301

52. Ibid., p 303

53. Ibid., p 307



Cory Library : Ntsikana the Messenger of God

## CHAPTER 5

## NTSIKANA AS INYANGA OF AMANGQIKA

It is an established fact that an immense attention has been devoted to Ntsikana by both religious and historical scholarship. Linked with the beginnings of Christianity on the Eastern Cape, Ntsikana shared in the task of planting that religion among amaXhosa.<sup>1</sup> For that reason, Ntsikana has been commended as a good example of Xhosa conversion to Christianity by a number of European scholars. Confirmation of this good Christian example of Ntsikana has not been lacking among African theologians and writers. For example in his work, 'Ntsikana: The Story of an African convert', Bokwe, in his comment on the progress of Christianity among amaGqika, attributed the success of that religion to the contributions made by Ntsikana.<sup>2</sup> Since the year 1910 until three decades ago, 'Ntsikana's Memorial day' (isikhumbuzo sikaNtsikana) had been observed by African Christians of the Eastern Cape on Easter Monday of every year.<sup>3</sup> The teachings and songs of Ntsikana had been the point of focus of celebrations at the gatherings. There had been a variation from the predominantly European presentation of the inyanga. Africans insisted on a denial of Van der Kemp's influence on Ntsikana. In seeking to establish the vocation of the inyanga as second to none, they denied that he was baptised by the missionaries.<sup>4</sup>



Underlying the present study is a firm conviction that the position of Ntsikana is no longer tenable among the majority of African Christians. The past three decades have witnessed a flight from the submissive humility and apology as epitomized by Ntsikana. There has been an assertion of the African traditional religion with its emphasis on the importance of land to religion.<sup>5</sup> In an article in 'Indaba', a descendant of Ntsikana was reported as complaining about the way her ancestor seemed to have been forgotten by the Xhosa community.<sup>6</sup> An attempt is accordingly made in this chapter to account for this neglect on the part of the black community. For purposes of drawing comparisons it will be necessary to draw on Nxele, particularly as recognition is given to the fact that Ntsikana was reacting to that inyanga most of the time.

Observed as an important feature in the life of Ntsikana was the close relationship that his family enjoyed with both amaNdlambe and amaNgqika. Ntsikana's father, Gaba an umCira by clan was a member of the amaNgqika tribe who lived for the greater part of his life among amaNdlambe.<sup>7</sup> This would point to the fact that the tribal affiliations that amaXhosa had were not observed as rigid boundaries which compartmentalised amaXhosa into exclusive entities. There were existing not such deadly hostilities among the two tribes as to warrant their separation from each other. On this account history could not be used to justify the granting of separate home-

lands to two Xhosa segments. . . . We note in this regard that the present homeland policy was founded on the basis that Africans are 'tribally' divided and have been so since time immemorial.<sup>8</sup> This argument cannot be pursued beyond this point in the present study. Rather it helps to establish that Gaba's family shared the full benefits of any citizen while living among amaNdlambe. He had stock and land. Whatmore Ndlambe had respect for the position of Ngqika as a member of the royal family. This was in keeping with a tradition that the lives and persons of chiefs would be held inviolable to commoners, even enemy chiefs.<sup>9</sup> The family on the other hand would have shared in the plight of amaNdlambe especially at the point of encountering the colonists.

Among amaNgqika Gaba occupied a prominent position of being a councillor to chief Ngqika. The issue of his residence among amaNdlambe did not seem to affect his status in this regard. He observed the requirement to travel to Ngqika's Great Place where he participated in giving advice to the chief as well as represented the interests of the people before the same. 'Imbizo' (a meeting of the chief and councillors) dealt with a wide range of matters. They sat as a court of law with powers to carry out penal sentences. In times of war they constituted a military council with rights to call up able-bodied men.<sup>10</sup> Lastly to be a councillor was a favour bestowed on a man by the chief. It was not by election. This background informa-

tion serves the purpose of establishing the fact that Ntsikana's family was fairly established and prominent in Xhosaland. Gaba had the necessary means to marry more than one wife. Even though only two were actually identified as official wives, the possibility of his having had more than that number cannot be ruled out. A reasonable wide and warm homestead could have made the acquisition of amaqadi (servant wives) a necessity. In keeping with what was traditional, Ntsikana married Nontsonta and Nomanto when the time for him to do it came.

#### CIRCUMSTANCES SURROUNDING NTSIKANA'S EMERGENCE AS INYANGA:

Especially in a study of a religious nature, it will not be out of place to account for the coincidence of the birth of Ntsikana in Ngqikaland rather than Ndlambeland in terms of predestination.<sup>11</sup> For it was among amaNgqika that Ntsikana was later to have the role of a national inyanga. Tradition has it that Nonabe was in an advanced state of pregnancy when she was forced to flee to her home in Ngqikaland. This followed her accusation of witchcraft by Noyiki, her husband's first wife. According to Tabata, Ntsikana was consequently born at Gwali near Alice.<sup>12</sup> AmaXhosa attach a religious significance to the matter of birth place. Reference is always made here to the location of 'inkaba' (the navel), the place where one's umbilical cord was buried. The cord is believed to provide a link with the land and ancestors (izinyanya).

The dating of Ntsikana's year of birth as 1780 poses as much problem as that of Nxele. A suggestion that Ntsikana was born in Ngqikaland rather than Ndlambeland would point to a time after 1796. This according to Peires was the year when Ngqika and his uncle Ndlambe fell out.<sup>13</sup> It was in fact round about that time that the house of Rharhabe was finally split into two. The disadvantage about that date is that Ntsikana would have been an infant when Vanderkemp came to Ngqikaland in 1799. Yet Bokwe records that Ntsikana was already in the cattle-herding age when Van der Kemp came to preach among amaNgqika.<sup>14</sup> AmaXhosa distinguish between sheep and goat-herding age, and cattle herding age. The latter caters for the ages of twelve and upwards. The recently circumcised could still be required to head cattle. On these grounds therefore the stipulation about the birth of Ntsikana in land that was radically designated as Ngqikaland is without a clear historical basis. Here historians may have simply written into earlier dates developments of a later age.

What contemporariness was there between Nxele and Ntsikana, this could have been in so far as they had the expulsion of amaXhosa from the Zuurveld in 1812 as a common event of concern. They were not of the same age otherwise. Nxele was much older than Ntsikana. It has been stated in the previous chapter that Nxele was already firmly established in his role as the inyanga of Ndlambe by the 1780s. By the time

of the emergence of Ntsikana which was about 1816, there was already an awareness on his part of the ideological influence of Nxele among the Xhosa nation. In a somewhat reactionary manner, Ntsikana had identified his role as that of challenging Nxele.<sup>15</sup> Prior to that, Ntsikana had been associated with Nxele's doctrine and was very conversant with what it was all about.<sup>16</sup> According to Ntsikana, Nxele claimed that God was on earth and not in the heavens. This Ntsikana contested emphasising the transcendental nature of God. Nxele said there were two Gods, one Tayi, and Mdalidiphu. On the question of the number of Gods, Ntsikana agreed with Nxele. He differed with him on the issue of the identity, saying that while one God was Thixo, the other was his Son.<sup>17</sup> This shows how far soaked Ntsikana had been in Nxele's doctrine. In this regard it has been the claim of some distinguished Xhosa historians that Ntsikana actually served his apprenticeship under Nxele.<sup>18</sup> This possibility cannot be ruled out. From the age of twelve Ntsikana lived in Ndlambeland. Also it would not have been a strange thing to happen for him to present himself to Ndlambe as he did following his experience of a vision. Ndlambe would have recognised him as a member of the Inyanga School. This discussion helps to confirm that Ntsikana was much junior to Nxele. His birth about 1780 may not be very disputable.<sup>19</sup>

#### NTSIKANA'S RELATION WITH NGQIKA:

There are two versions of account for the introduction of

Ntsikana as Ngqika's inyanga. According to Peires, it was after Ntsikana had experienced a mystical visitation ~~that~~ he betook himself to Ndlambe who rejected him. He had then turned to Ngqika.<sup>20</sup> It was in a state of disappointment and resentment that Ntsikana aligned himself with Ngqika as against Ndlambe. In keeping with this version Ntsikana had his experience of 'ukuthwasa' in Ndlambeland, and a qualified inyanga of Nxele's calibre would have naturally prepared him. For the reasons already stated the possibility of an association between the two iinyanga especially at the early stages of Ntsikana's practice, is preferable in this work. This tradition serves the purpose of establishing Ntsikana as truly qualified as inyanga, as far as Xhosa cultural tradition was concerned. That he was later to leave as well as contradict what he had learnt from Nxele did not have much consequence. The matter of training by a qualified inyanga was a serious one among amaXhosa, and was often guarded by jealousy.

The second version has been put forward by Bokwe.<sup>21</sup> Here Ntsikana is described as having moved from the Peddie district where his family had always lived. He went to settle at Gqora in the valleys of the Mankazana hills near the Kat River. Fort Beaufort is sited very close to where Ntsikana was. It was in this same area of Mankazana that chief Ngqika had his Great Place. Ntsikana who had inherited his father's property when the latter died, was already married

to two wives Nontsonta who bore him Kobe and Nomanto the mother of Dukwana when the move took place. From his father Ntsikana had according to Hodgson, inherited the position of a councillor.<sup>22</sup> He was therefore an established member of the Ngqika tribe with a very close association with the chief. It was while he lived in Ngqikaland that Ntsikana had the experience of 'ukuthwasa'. That had the implications of making Ntsikana even more important as a councillor. He was accorded by both the chief and people the respect and reverence usually associated with 'ubunyanga'.

The settlement of Ntsikana in Ngqikaland meant that he should be involved in a situation of a cosmopolitan nature culturally. AmaNgqika had always maintained a liberal and generous attitude towards such people of other races as came to dwell among them. From time immemorial amaXhosa had a free association and interaction with the Khoi - Khoi. This was particularly true of the Ngqika section who during the feuds with Ndlambe enjoyed the support of the Khoi - Khoi, amongst others.<sup>23</sup> Naturally the Khoi had a tremendous influence on the culture of amaNgqika. For example Hodgson has observed that 'Thixo' which amaNgqika were the first to adopt as a designation for God, was a contribution from the Khoi. 'Tuikwa' was the original term for the Khoi - Khoi Deity.<sup>24</sup> Further there has been a claim by some historians that Ngqika's mother was of some Gonuqua stock. This however

has not been firmly established. As in the case of Nxele's mother it bears insinuations of attributes of superiority that are sometimes assigned to the Khoi - Khoi at the expense of the African. Ngqika's mother was a powerful and influential woman otherwise.

This same accommodative generosity was extended to Europeans by amaNgqika. A group of renegade boers under Coenraad de Buys had joined Ngqika at the beginning of 1799. In no time Buys acquired influence over Ngqika according to Milton.<sup>25</sup> He became Ngqika's chief councillor especially on matters related to dealings with Europeans and the Colonial government. Buys enjoyed above all a good relationship with Ngqika's mother. It was that position of prominence that Buys held among amaNgqika which made it possible for Vanderkemp to live as well as evangelise among amaNgqika in the period of a year that he spent among them. The advantage for Ngqika was that he emerged as an important chief among amaXhosa. It was at this same time also that he was beginning to refer to himself as 'inkosi enkulu yamaXhosa'. He could rely on the support and protection by Europeans as he had some living in his domain..

As already stated Ndlambe did not dispute this claim to paramountcy by Ngqika. But he certainly had reservations with the way it was achieved as well as maintained. It had dawned



quite early on Ndlambe through his experience in the Zuurveld that the Europeans did not seek to be accepted by their African hosts, and neither did they wish to be included in the African social systems they found in existence in Africa. Instead as Elphick puts it: "cultural chauvinism and feelings of religious superiority, were common to all European colonisers....." <sup>26</sup>

Hardly could Ntsikana ignore the factor of the political outlook of his mentor in the development of his theology. In both his preaching and composition of hymns, Ntsikana epitomised the positive religious response of amaNgqika to the invasion by a foreign and revolutionary Christian religion. He would not insist on what was indigenous about his own African traditional religion. It is for this that his position is criticised in this work. The same attitude of compromise in Ntsikana saw him give in, firstly on the issue of incest as practised by Ngqika. He did the same when he would not insist on the designation Qamata for God. 'Thixo' having been adopted by the missionaries for the Christian concept of God had been imposed on Xhosa converts as a term to use for God. <sup>27</sup>

Ntsikana demonstrated a negation of the ancestors in his denial of the impurity of incest (umbulo) in the relationship Ngqika had with Thuthula. As Soga states in his work, 'Intlalo kaXhosa', 'umbulo' was believed to be a serious

offence against the ancestors. It was for instance believed that a refusal by a newly born child to feed on a mother's breasts was a sign of an unconfessed offence by the woman. The child would be saved by the confession of a mother. This same requirement was made in the case of umkhwetha (circumcised youngman) who would not heal. Lastly the crossing of a river if it had to be safe posed demands for people to confess their sins before entering the water.<sup>28</sup> This kind of confession was addressed at izinyanya and in that sense was not influenced by the Christian understanding of confession of sin. The war situation between Ngqika and Ndlambe could have been obviated by Ngqika's umbulo (confession). It was the duty of the inyanga to point out the necessity for such an observation of what pertained to izinyanya. In his attitude of tolerance Ntsikana decided to compromise.

At the same time that Ntsikana displayed this countenance of tolerance in Ngqikaland, he opposed the military stance of Ndlambe against the colony. Here he isolated Nxele the inyanga of amaNdlambe for some special attack.<sup>29</sup> He accused Nxele of aspiring to be a chief saying, "I am only a candle. Those who are chiefs will remain chiefs because they were given (the chieftainship) by Him and only He can take it away; I have not added anything to myself; I am just as I was, Nxele is wrong in saying he should be saluted; he is not a chief."<sup>30</sup> Ntsikana said this because of a realisation that

Nxele occupied a unique position among amaXhosa whether mNdlambe or mNgqika. He had resolved to challenge Nxele's position of importance. As for the claim that Nxele demanded to be saluted as a chief, all that can be said is that there is lack of a record of the same demand by Nxele. Yet amaXhosa would not hesitate to refer to Nxele as chief if they felt that he deserved it. As already explained amaXhosa sometimes conferred the status of a chief on a commoner. This was in so far as the man would have been decided as deserving. Not only by amaXhosa but even by some Europeans Nxele was accorded a respect due to a chief. This might account for the manner an artist such as the one who painted governors and kings, thought it proper to get Nxele's portrait. Commenting on the difference between Nxele and Ntsikana Hodgson said, "Ntsikana fulfils his ascribed role as hereditary councillor to Ngqika and Nxele achieves status as war-doctor to Ndlambe. But one is for evolutionary change and the other for militant resistance....."<sup>31</sup>

#### PROBLEMS OF WAR:

Almost all available material seems to point that Ntsikana was vehemently opposed to warfare. It did not appear clearly established whether this trait in him was there because of a personal and psychological disposition or for simply theological reasons. Peires commenting on Ntsikana's life before he had religious visitation said: ".....Ntsikana was a locally respected but quite unremarkable homestead-head in

Ndlambe's country".<sup>32</sup> This description bears a suggestion that Ntsikana was not a youngman of any outstanding character. He was not a forthcoming man. He would have hardly established himself nor proved his worth among peers, whether in hunting or stick fighting. Certainly there were differences in background between him and Nxele. We recall in this respect that as a young man Nxele began to exhibit the hysterical symptoms associated with the initial divine.<sup>33</sup> There is lack of record of a similar happening in the case of Ntsikana.

The possibility of Ntsikana's resistance to an association with warfare becomes more explainable where reference is made to his theological outlook. As explained above here Ntsikana's emphasis on the transcendent nature of God came rather too close to presenting God as very detached from his creation. God whom Ntsikana believed to be in heaven could not be involved in the affairs of a sinful world. It becomes difficult to argue against suggestions of a Calvinistic missionary influence in this thinking of Ntsikana. A radical line of demarcation had been drawn by calvinists between things sacred and those profane. This meant that to be holy posed demands that one should discard things of the earth. This was contrary to African thinking which had always viewed God as very much involved with the world of man. Qamata was tied up with the world through the ancestors who were recognised as the custodians of that world. Problems that Ntsikana had

with ancestors especially at the point of his conversion determined that he would not see God as at the centre of human struggles.

This negative disposition to war in the inyanga of amaNgqika meant that there would be a conflict between Ntsikana and Ngqika especially where decisions had to be made whether the nation should go to war or not. We recall in this respect that Ngqika had been initiated to the fighting of battles quite early in his life by his uncle, Ndlambe. In 1793 he fought his first recorded war against minor clans in an alliance with colonists under Barend Lindeque. In 1796 Ngqika had fought to oust his uncle Ndlambe as regent of amaRharhabe. By 1804 when de Mist visited Xhosaland, Ngqika was at the pinnacle of his power having subdued Ndlambe.<sup>34</sup> It was by war that Ngqika was later brought down from that position of power in 1807. Thus he had every reason to hope that by the same means he could be restored to his original position of power some day. Ngqika, except when prevailing circumstances were against it realized that pacifism and submission were not likely to get him very far.

The events leading to the battle of AmaLinde in 1818 highlighted in a demonstrative manner this difference between the chief and inyanga of amaNgqika. Hintsa having established his control over all Xhosa chiefdoms east of the Kei had

sought to extend his authority to the West. Taking advantage of the dynastic feud among amaRharhabe, he diplomatically made public his recognition of Ndlambe as the paramount of all the tribes west of the Kei. This was against the arrangements made by Lord Charles Somerset at the Kat River Conference of 1817. In return Ndlambe began to claim Hintsa as King of all amaXhosa. He went further to seize cattle belonging to some of Ngqika's sub-chiefs. In that situation which was nothing less than provocative, all other Ngqika councillors advised an attack of amaNdlambe.<sup>35</sup> Ntsikana became the only dissenting vote. He sent Ncamashe one of his men to Ngqika with the message, "..... tell him some calamity, I do not know what, is about to happen. I see the heads of the Gaika being devoured by ants".<sup>36</sup> The story was that even though Ntsikana had spoken so vociferously against that war, he was ignored by Ngqika. Rather the chief preferred the advice of another councillor name Manxoyi who insisted on the war. AmaNgqika were defeated by amaNdlambe at the battle of amaLinde. On the other hand Ndlambe and Nxele demonstrated a close working relationship on the occasion of that war. Ntsikana survived that war by three years for he died of natural causes in the year 1822.

Prayer instead of warfare became a major component of Ntsikana's message to amaNgqika. He emphasised the importance of submission to the will of God. In God, he pointed out there was protection and peace. This prayerful attitude

of submission to the will of God on the part of Ntsikana could not be dismissed as simply collaboration with the schemes of Christain missionaries. Ntsikana was convinced about the matters of the Christian faith. He saw himself as an instrument in the hand of God rather than simply manipulated by powerful structures of white domination. But what happened to faithful Ntsikana and followers at the hands of fellow white Christians was quite telling about how his Christian status could not be taken into serious account when political decisions had to be made. Bokwe described things succinctly when he said.,

"Through ill - treatment at the hands of some of the European settlers who were then arriving to reside in the Fort Beaufort district, Ntsikana and his people were, at this time, forced to leave their homes and their unreaped gardens, full of corn and just ready to be harvested. The Rev. John Brownlee had by this time arrived in Kafirland, and was stationed at Chumie. It seems that arrangements had been entered into by him and Ntsikana, that the latter should be removed as soon as the corn was gathered in".<sup>37</sup>

It is the disappointment sustained by black Christians at the socio-political level as dispensed by fellow white Christians that this study highlights as a concern. The choice for many has been

between the position of Nxele and that of Ntsikana. Whether to continue to emphasise what is spiritual about the Gospel and neglect giving attention to matters of structural engagement especially when it comes to matters of racial relations, this poses a terrible conflict. For too long in its claim for universalism Western theology has affirmed instead what the status quo had defined as political reality. Claiming helplessness in the face of wicked political arrangements there has been a subtle persuasion for the faithful to cooperate. The role of Rev. Brownlee as cited by Bokwe was significant in this respect.

It is the assumption of this study that different attitudes to warfare entertained by Nxele and Ntsikana were basic to the differences in their religious outlooks. While Nxele earned a reputation as a warfare-doctor who instigated amaNdlambe, Ntsikana has been commended for peace and submission. The latter opposed Nxele on this very crucial point. It is imperative to establish in this study which of the two positions, Nxele's or Ntsikana's could be said to be traditionally Xhosa. Was a position of neutrality to war a familiar one among amaXhosa? Is it suggested by historians that amaXhosa had two irreconcilable cosmologies determining their attitude to warfare? Peires seems to suggest this possibility where he claims, "Nxele was a wardoctor and his cosmology was one of battle between good and evil. Ntsikana was a man of peace and submission, and his cosmology was one of peace and



submission".<sup>38</sup> Can a theological viewpoint with regard to warfare be formulated in abstract discussion? The scarcity of a supportive historical material regarding a Xhosa cosmology with negative attitude to warfare presents neutrality as a foreign option. The discussion of the pros and cons of a formulation of a theological viewpoint in abstract discussion proceeds as part of the debate on liberation theology.

An observation is made in the study that historians restrict their discussion of warfare to the means. In their study of the wars between the colonists and amaXhosa very extensive and rather undue attention has been given to comparisons of the weaponry used by the two groups. These tools of war have been evaluated on an inferior/superior continuum scale. This is definitely so where Peires makes the point, "The throwing assegai was not a very effective weapon and was not usually used with intention to kill....".<sup>39</sup> On the other hand anthropologists and other social scientists have not been very helpful in this regard either. All their activity in this regard has been concentrated on deprecating war rather than attempt to understand this behaviour pattern which has played such a tremendous role in human affairs.<sup>40</sup> They have in this sense failed to provide enough insight as to stimulate the historian to do further research. In spite of the weaponry used, war is about contact between humans. It is about reconciliation which is what warring nations and tribes believe themselves to be about in the end. According to Turney High the central fact of military theory is that war is a sociologic device, and weapons are merely tools used to facili-

tate its practice.<sup>41</sup>

There exists enough evidence to confirm that among nineteenth century amaXhosa, wars were recognised as social institutions for a variety of motives. This attitude amaXhosa shared with a number of other nonliterate communities. Wars have been to resolve differences and conflicts between neighbours. Long before amaNdlambe and amaNgqika ever engaged in dynastic feuds, or wars against the colonists, various wars had been fought among Xhosa groups. Rharhabe and Gcaleka waged wars against one another. The wars had resulted in new social arrangements. Rharhabe together with his sons Mlawu and Ntimbo died in a war against abaThembu. Apart from fighting against one another both amaNdlambe and amaNgqika had engagements with a number of minor chiefdoms. These fights had been a result of the desires to acquire vassals for purposes of security. It is possible therefore to argue that warfare among amaXhosa was not a strange phenomenon. It is however true that total war as experienced in engagements with whites was new and shattering. Wars between Xhosa chiefs or with their African and Khoi neighbours were hardly very bloody.<sup>42</sup>

It was not simply the degree of destruction to human life and property as a result of war that seems to have been Ntsikana's problem. His whole outlook was that of opposition to warfare. This existence of the disposition of pacifism in the inyanga

is possible to account for in terms of the influence missionary agents had on him. . The form of Christianity that Ntsikana was exposed to by missionaries was one that categorically distinguished between salvation and liberation. There had been rather too much stress on a Spiritualistic form of Salvation from sin. To a large extent this salvation was confined to matters of an abstract and individualistic nature.<sup>43</sup> It mattered not on the other hand what happened at the concrete structural level. If one could be sure of a place in heaven, all the better. Later in the study especially when we come to the chapter on African and Black theology, it will be demonstrated how restrictive this understanding of sin and salvation was. It was restrictive because in its individualistic nature it failed to cater for the communal outlook of the African.<sup>44</sup>

AmaXhosa had always been conscious of humanity's origin from a common source.<sup>45</sup> The communal outlook resulting thereon meant that tendencies of division among men should be frowned upon. There was an acceptance that sin caused a division between man and God. This division by sin was conceived to find expression in the denial of human existence to others. The situation saw the 'others' living a life of alienation. It was therefore realised that any attempt to rectify what had gone wrong had to have the level of dealing with others as a starting point.<sup>46</sup> It was as attempts to put right by debate what had gone wrong and incorrigible failed, that war was seen

as inevitable. Otherwise amaXhosa did not unconditionally advocate or condone war. There were very clear reasons why any tribe decided to engage in war, as such reasons would be thoroughly discussed by both chief and councillors. Nxele among amaNdlambe and Ntsikana among amaNgqika enjoyed the position of councillors. In the case of amaNgqika Ntsikana met with opposition from the other councillors, and consequently the nation. Wars that amaNgqika had fought before and after the time of Ntsikana were demonstrative of the way the pacifist position was an alien one. It could not be defended particularly where survival could not be guaranteed by any other means. History records that not even the attitude of Harry Smith's paternalism would stop amaNgqika under Mlanjeni from fighting against the colonists.<sup>47</sup>

Therefore when the comparison is made in the study between the religious outlooks of the two iinyanga, Nxele and Ntsikana, it is the former that receives preference. The reason for this is that in his emphasis on the retention of the traditional Cosmological world, particularly in the face of the onslaught by Europeans, Nxele strived for the protection of the identity and dignity of the African. It is realized however that the Ntsikana strand continues among African Christians. To date there are Africans who understand their Christianity as going English, German, Dutch, Roman etc. This is possible to explain in terms of the reward and punishment strategy

whereby inclinations towards European culture by African converts have been rewarded.<sup>48</sup> But in this age of Black theology, Black consciousness and Liberation theology it will be true to say that the pendulum is swinging in favour of the Nxele position.<sup>49</sup> There has been a demonstration of disapproval by young blacks at the manner the church was too much identified with the status quo.<sup>50</sup> A resistance to what the status quo was about has meant that the church should be just as much resisted. It has been pointed out how irrelevant the church has been to the needs of the black community. All its strivings have been suspiciously viewed as aimed at converting blacks into some unidentifiable creatures. The church has been responsible for a division and alienation within the Black community. In all its evangelising and preaching the church has presented this position of submission as found in Ntsikana as the one and only option that could be said to be Christian. This option has on the other hand been presented in a very deterministic fashion where Christian converts have had no opportunity to engage in dialogue.

The difference in the manner of death between Nxele and Ntsikana was very symbolic. Ntsikana who faithfully maintained his attitude of submission to fate did the same when it came to dealing with his death. Advising his attendants to bury him in a christian fashion, Ntsikana had turned the first sod of the soil in a demonstrative manner. On the other hand Nxele

died defiant. He was effecting an escape from Robben Island when he was drowned in 1821. That spirit of defiance did not however die with him. It was maintained by following generations and has been referred to in recent struggles of the black community against white domination.

FOOTNOTES

1. Hodgson, "The Hymns of the Xhosa Prophet, Ntsikana" p 4
2. J.K. Bokwe, NTSIKANA: The Story of an African Convert, South Africa: Lovedale Press, 1914 p 1
3. James Calata, Isikhumbuzo sikaNtsikana Ongcwele South Africa: Lovedale Press, 1946 p 2
4. Ibid., p 3
5. Peires, "Nxele, Ntsikana and the Origins" p 6
6. Daily Despatch, Indaba sub-publication, 6 September, 1984 East London.
7. Bokwe, NTSIKANA:: The Story of an African Convert p 4
8. Marks, "South Africa" p 8
9. Peires, The House of Phalo p 37
10. Ludwig Alberti, Account of the tribal life and Customs of the Xhosa in 1807 Cape Town: A.A. Balkema, 1968 p 87
11. The World Book Dictionary Vol 2 by C.L. Barnhart and R.K. (Illinois 1984 p 1614  
 "The act of fact of ordaining beforehand; destiny; fate; a kind of moral predestination, or overruling principle which cannot be resisted".

12. Interview with Nompilo Tabata, Duncan Village, East London,  
30 March, 1985

13. Peires, "Causes and Development of the Frontier War of  
1818 - 19" p 46

14. Bokwe, NTSIKANA p 5

15. Hodgson, "The Hymns of the Xhosa Prophet". p 2

T.B. Soga, Intlalo kaXhosa p 57

16. Hodgson, "The Hymns of the Xhosa Prophet". p 3

17. Kaye Ms

18. Hodgson, "The Hymns of the Xhosa Prophet". p 3

19. Ibid., p 1

20. Peires, The House of Phalo p 72

21. Bokwe, NTSIKANA P 5

22. Hodgson, "The Hymns of the Xhosa Prophet". p 3

23. Moodie, The Record

24. J.T. Vander Kemp (1804) "An Account of ..... Caffraria"  
Transactions of the London Missionary Society. I p 397



Kaye, Travels and Researches in Caffraria p 339

E.W. Smith, African Ideas of God London: Edinburgh House Press, 1950 p 99

25. Milton, Edges of War p 53

26. R. Elphick and H. Gilomee, The Shaping of South African Society 1652 - 1820 London: Longman Penguin Southern African, 1979 p 363

27. Hodgson, "The Hymns of the Xhosa Prophet". p 18

28. T.B. Soga, Intlalo ka Xhosa p 121

29. Sales, Mission Stations and the Coloured Communities of the Eastern Cape 1800 - 52 p 64

30. Kaye Ms

Peires, The House of Phalo pp 72 - 73

31. Hodgson, "The Hymns of the Xhosa Prophet". p 2

32. Peires, "The Origins of Xhosa Religious Reaction" p 59

33. Peires, The House of Phalo p 69

34. Peires, "Causes and Development of the Frontier War" pp 44-8

35. Peires, The House of Phalo pp 62 - 3

36. Bokwe, NTSIKANA p 20
37. Ibid., p 27
38. Peires, The House of Phalo p 73
39. Peires, "The Origins of Xhosa Religious Reaction" p 53
40. H.H. Turney - High, Primitive War Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1949 p xiii
41. Ibid., p 5
42. Alberti, Account of the tribal life and Customs pp 87 - 93
43. G. Gutierrez, A Theology of Liberation London: S.C.M. Press, 1974 p 66
44. Kropf, Kafir - English Dictionary p 154
45. Ibid., p 154
- Alberti, Account of tribal life and Customs p 13  
"Uhlanga" was the source of origin. See also Smith E.W. African Ideas of God p 105
46. W.A. Saayman, "Liberation Theology" MISSIOLOGY - GUIDE I for MSB302 - 9 Pretoria: University of South Africa, 1982 p 11
47. T.R.H. Davenport, SOUTH AFRICA p 100

48. A Hlubi Anglican priest from the Herschel district told how his father a teacher in the mission school and catechist arranged for him to be sent away when the time came for him to be circumcised.

49. Peires, The House of Phalo p 74

50. Recently there has been demonstrated a rejection of the church by young people of the Eastern Cape for its too much identification with the status quo.

## CHAPTER 6

NXELE AND NTSIKANA MEET THE MISSIONARIES:  
DIVERGENT RESPONSES

In this chapter I wish to examine some of the implications of the Western European missionary activity for the nineteenth century amaXhosa of the Eastern Cape. It should be realised that contact between amaXhosa and the Europeans meant that two diverse cosmological worldviews came together. Inevitably there developed a situation of conflict because two groups of different cultural backgrounds and different lifestyles had confronted each other. In his account of what became the experience of the parties involved, Ashley said that the Eastern Cape became a flashpoint. The differences between the two expressed themselves on such fronts as the educational, the political, economic and religious.<sup>1</sup>

INquiry is confined here to the activities of two iinyanga (diviners) of amaXhosa, Nxele and Ntsikana. These figures were in the forefront of amaXhosa's religious response to the Western form of religion, Christianity. Their religious outlooks including the diversity among themselves seemed to be expressive of a turmoil in the spiritual life of amaXhosa of their time. The period covered in this chapter is between the years 1799 and 1822. While the beginning of that time witnessed the establishment of missionary work among amaXhosa, the end saw the termination of the lives of the two diviners. NOT even death

could reconcile conflicting attitudes of the two iinyanga to the presence of whites on their land. Nxele maintained an attitude of resistance until his death at sea between Robben Island and the Cape. In contrast Ntsikana died on the mainland having submitted to a strange symbolic universe that barely allowed him scope to actively contribute.

Nxele and Ntsikana addressed the same contemporary socio-political situation. There was a tremendous political instability as amaXhosa were coming under increasing pressure within as well as without.<sup>2</sup> There were continuous clashes between amaNdlambe and amaNgqika, with each of the groups seeking to assert its superiority over the other. At the same time both the groups were being pressurised by whites who at that time were encroaching on their land. Furthermore there was keen competition between amaXhosa and Europeans over cattle, for both the groups were pastoralists.<sup>3</sup> As demonstrated earlier in the thesis, between Europeans and amaXhosa there were misunderstandings about each other's system of economic exchange. Wars between whites and blacks became unavoidable, and over a period of one hundred years nine wars were fought by the two groups with both the sides sustaining large casualties.<sup>4</sup> It was with regard to the armed struggle by amaXhosa that the two iinyanga seemed to differ the most religiously. While Nxele approved of a stance of militancy, Ntsikana objected. That difference was extended to the way they responded to Christian religion whose force was begin-

ning to exercise great influence among amaXhosa at this same time.

To clear up matters of methodology as far as the research on this chapter is concerned, I wish to state that the data relate to the agents of the London Missionary Society (LMS). The reason for this is that it was mainly missionaries from that society who had direct contact with Nxele and Ntsikana. VanderKemp, Read and William met the two iinyanga at various times.

Operating at the Cape at the same time as the London Missionary Society were the Moravian Brethren with stations at Baviaans Kloof (founded in 1737) and Genadendal (founded in 1806).<sup>5</sup> The reference to the proliferation of missionary bodies helps to establish that there was a common desire among a number of European nations to Christianise Africans. The contribution made by European Christian missionaries will be critically evaluated against the background of suspicion that they were part of the package of colonialism.<sup>6</sup>

In Africa many of the early missionaries and Christian politicians helped establish replicas of European churches, cities and patterns of ministry.<sup>7</sup> This situation had been facilitated by the destruction of African polity and religion as Europeans claimed African land for their possession. It is the view of the study that the state of alienation to which the African was assigned accounts for the ease with which he was then incorpora-

ted into a foreign colonial form of Christian religion.<sup>8</sup>

#### NXELE'S ENCOUNTER WITH CHRISTIANITY:

We cannot determine quite precisely the time when Nxele came under Christian influence. The possibility of Nxele's family coming under VanderKemp's influence during the missionary's stay of a year in Ngqikaland cannot be ruled out. It has already been established that there was a high degree of mobility among amaXhosa. The boundaries between Ngqikaland and Ndlambeland as well as Xhosaland and the Colony were not seriously adhered to. Whether in Xhosaland or in the colony, Nxele's family maintained some contact with Christianity. Nxele's ability to speak Dutch had at the same time made it possible for the inyanga to learn the missionary styles of preaching and evangelising.

As we have already seen in chapter four, from an early age Nxele had showed signs of being a highly unusual person. This tendency had culminated in his initiation as inyanga. What is of interest however was that even after Nxele had qualified as inyanga he maintained contact with the missionaries in Bethelsdorp.<sup>9</sup> He had discussions of a religious nature with both VanderKemp and Read. While in Xhosaland Nxele paid visits to Grahamstown where he spent long hours in discussion with Van der Lingen, the Chaplain to the Cape Regiment.<sup>10</sup> He became so important a figure that missionaries took advantage of opportunities to visit Nxele's home. There is a record of such a visit paid to Nxele's homestead by two missionaries in about May 1816.<sup>11</sup> It could possibly

have been on such visits that a European artist was able to draw the portrait of Nxele included in this thesis. What is remarkable about the fairly good communication between Nxele and the missionaries at this time is that it all took place after the expulsion of amaXhosa from the Zuurveld in 1811 - 12. Nxele had been able to disregard what whites had done to his people and to the land of his fathers, and offered a hand of friendship.

A change took place in Nxele round about this time.<sup>12</sup> This was a consequence of meetings that Nxele had with missionaries. The inyanga steadily came to realize himself as having a somewhat special mission to his people. God had sent him, he argued, to punish the sins of his people. He began to preach a queer message, persuading his people to put away witchcraft and bloodshed.<sup>13</sup> He was convinced at the same time that among his people he occupied the same position as VanderKemp. He made this claim while describing his religious experience to Read, saying,

'A large fire was presented before him, and that there were persons who had got hold of him to throw him into it, but that Taay came and delivered him. He it was who told him that he had once sent Jankanna (viz Nyengana), the Xhosa name for VanderKemp to the Caffres, but they would not listen; that he must now go and make his will known to them.'<sup>14</sup>

Thus in spite of all that had happened to amaXhosa politically, Nxele imagined himself an equal brother with whites.



We should remember that chief Ndlambe who had taken it upon himself to sponsor Nxele, had offered the inyanga a sanctuary at a time when the amaNdlambe community sought to label him as mad and thus dispose of him. Having offered him a place where to erect his kraal, Ndlambe had proceeded to provide the inyanga with cattle.<sup>15</sup> As head of state Ndlambe had a good reason to be fascinated by Nxele's preaching against the shedding of blood, theft and witchcraft. Any discouragement of such malpractices could only result in solidarity among amaNdlambe. But to the disappointment of Ndlambe, Nxele went further to challenge the chief himself on the issue of polygamy. Arguing matters biblically, Nxele reproached the chief claiming that if God had intended man to have more than one wife he would have provided Adam with more than one.<sup>16</sup> Ndlambe refused to put away any of his wives. Further we may ask the question as to the origin of the strange ideas Nxele had against polygamy. It is not possible here to proceed beyond the culture of the European missionaries with whom Nxele was in contact at this time. Otherwise Nxele's traditional background accounted for a communal approach to matters of matrimony. It was for that reason that his widowed mother would have been added to the household of an already married uncle when she returned to Ndlandeband. He himself could enjoy the care and comfort of a home in a family structure extending beyond the nuclear family. The European culture to which African converts were being introduced emphasised the nuclear family as the centre of focus. Converts were put under

pressure to conform to this foreign arrangement.

At this same time chief Ndlambe and the rest of the community leaders of amaXhosa had ceased to be a reference group for Nxele.<sup>17</sup> By reference group here is meant any individual or group that a person may have as a means of self-judgement or self-evaluation. It was remarkable that at this level of his development, Nxele prefaced all his preaching by making references to Nyengana, or simply claiming that he was witnessing to what Nyengana had said.<sup>18</sup> His constant reference was to the fact that his authority was from the white man whom he (and amaXhosa) had seen and heard, as well as from above.<sup>19</sup> No doubt Nxele was rewarded for his attitude towards chieftainship. Considering his position of power in an African social system, the chief was conceived as a hindrance by the missionaries. Anybody helping to dispose of that source of power would be accordingly favoured. Dr Goba has made the observation that African converts to Christianity were invariably pressurised to renounce their African cultural milieu at that point where they became Christians, part of that cultural milieu involved allegiance to the chief.<sup>20</sup> According to the standard set by missionaries, to be a true Christian meant that one should cease to participate in the traditional life of the community. In the words of Cantwell Smith, the Christian faith ramified to every aspect of the believer's life, moral, social and intellectual.<sup>21</sup> This attitude where departure from traditional culture is commended to converts is found questionable by a number of present day African theologians. These have

gone further and taken a stand on this subject especially at international and ecumenical conferences. But in Nxele's and Ntsikana's day there were no such platforms. To be Christian meant a forthright rejection of any claim to the old tradition.<sup>22</sup>

It is difficult to determine exactly how far or how much of a Christian convert Nxele could be said to have been, in spite of all the change in him. This is for two reasons. Firstly, if baptism should be an accepted norm for entry into the Christian community, Nxele would not qualify. There is no extant record of Nxele's formal baptism. Secondly, even though Nxele seemed to have appropriated a large proportion of the Christian doctrinal teachings, he on the other hand retained elements of an African traditional religion. For example, when Christian converts and missionaries preached they used the Khoi name of God - 'Thixo' - whereas Nxele faithfully adhered to Dali (his short form for Mdalidiphu).<sup>23</sup> Even though Qamata and Thixo were not differing entities there was something inferior for him about a god designated 'Thixo! This same argument accounts for a refutation of Khoi connections supposed to lie in Nxele's background.<sup>24</sup> Otherwise the designation 'Thixo' would not have been experienced as strange by him. Nxele had problems with the second person of the Trinity, Jesus. He substituted the name Tayi Tayi claiming that the latter was born of the same mother as Jesus.<sup>25</sup> Otherwise Nxele seemed to have a fairly good grasp of the Fall of Adam. He demonstrated this in his preaching where he pleaded for people to turn away from their sins. There is no doubt here that

missionaries had managed to convince him as to the individual nature of sin where forgiveness was clouded in a lot of mystery, such as one would have in a private or charismatic experience.<sup>26</sup> The next doctrinal matter accounting for much fascination as far as Nxele was concerned was the resurrection. This can be understood, because resurrection was possible to reconcile with his traditional belief.<sup>27</sup> Death does not mark an end as far as amaXhosa are concerned. There has always been a belief in continuity of life after death.

Lastly, Nxele had no doubt that he and VanderKemp worshipped the same God. Conversion therefore did not necessarily mean an abandonment of a traditional cosmological worldview. His traditional life was just as acceptable to God as any other. Nxele rightly understood God as the source of all Being. As umXhosa Nxele referred to God as Dal'ubomi (creator of life); Dal'uhlanga (creator of the human race). According to Soga amaXhosa have a conception of a Supreme Being: a God who is the creator of all things, who controls all, and is the rewarder of good and the punisher of evil. Even though the Supreme Being took a human form it is not worshipped. No direct approach is made to God by amaXhosa, but this is always through the medium of the iminyanya or ancestral spirits, who in the unseen world are nearer to him and known more than men on earth. According to Dwane this presentation of divinity as human meant that God among amaXhosa assumed FORM.<sup>28</sup> This then suggests a difference between the way amaXhosa con-

ceived God and the way the Sotho - Tswana conceived MODIMO. By the latter God is referred to only in the third class of Nouns.<sup>29</sup> There may well be a need for a further research by African Scholars to determine whether there is universalism among Africans in the way God is conceived. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to prove whether there is diversity in the understanding of various African groups.

The question of Nxele's baptism does not warrant any exploration, especially where consideration is given to Xhosa interpretation of 'ukuphehlelela' as given by Mqotsi. 'Ukuphehlelela' (baptism) is a rite which marks a completion of initiation. It is not performed at the beginning as is the case with Westerners.<sup>30</sup> What is important though is that Nxele had heard the Gospel preached by the missionaries. He became a believer, but one who actively engaged the Gospel in a serious dialogue with the Xhosa ways of life. Nxele saw God as very much involved with creation. He did not emphasise the transcendental nature of God.<sup>31</sup>

#### CHANGE IN NXELE'S RELIGIOUS OUTLOOK:

It was after many years of involvement with Christianity that Nxele's whole religious outlook began to change. Like someone opting for reversion to an earlier state in his religious life, Nxele began to negate some of the claims he had made as a converted Christian. He publicly demonstrated protesting that practices pertaining to his traditional culture were not anything to be ashamed of. Even though Nxele had earlier not smeared

his body with imbola (red ochre) he began to smear it. He proceeded to marry two women, thus indulging in polygamy something he had warned Ndlambe against, as described earlier on.

In his preaching Nxele began to proclaim that there were two Gods. While Thixo was God of the whites, Mdalidiphu was the God of the black people.<sup>32</sup> We will recall before this time Nxele who did not distinguish between the God of whites and Qamata actually claimed that there was only one God. Nxele who had ceased to be judgmental in his attitude towards his people was re-incorporated into their ranks. He was restored to his original position of importance as inyanga of the Ndlambe nation. This restoration happened for Nxele had re-appreciated the cultural milieu of his people.<sup>33</sup> Cabral explaining the dynamics of a situation of change such as involved Nxele further contends that some reconversion is indispensable for anyone in the same position as Nxele. He declares, "A reconversion of minds - of mental sets - is thus indispensable to the true integration of people into the liberation movement. Such reconversion - re-Africanization, in our case - may take place before the struggle but it is completed only during the course of the struggle, through daily contact with the popular masses in the community and sacrifice required by the struggle".<sup>34</sup>

It is significant that historically this radical change in Nxele was taking place soon after he had had a meeting with Read in April 1816.<sup>35</sup> Until that meeting, Nxele had continued a faithful convert, loyal to the missionaries. As confirmation of this

assertion, Peires points out that in 1816 Nxele viewed the missionaries as brothers in a common pursuit. He even urged them to establish themselves under his protection.<sup>36</sup> This historian accounts for the change in Nxele as follows, "The dynamic of Nxele's personal development and the dynamic of the historical situation in which he was placed made it impossible for him to co-operate with the European missionaries for very long".<sup>37</sup>

Nxele had to try and find an answer to the inevitable question, as put by Mafeje, "What does it mean for an African to be a Christian? What does it mean for him to preach brotherhood in a world in which he is a victim of total alienation? Whatever the answer, could it mean the same thing for him as for his white fellow Christian who is structurally and culturally distinct".<sup>38</sup> According to Peires, it had become clear to Nxele that Orthodox Christianity as embodied by the missionaries would not accommodate him as a brother. The authenticity of his visions as well as the divinity of his origins would be a ceaseless hindrance in that respect.<sup>39</sup>

Interest that Nxele should have in the preservation of the traditional culture of his people, determined that he should further engage in their political struggle. He was present at a political meeting convened on the banks of the Kat River in 1817 by Lord Charles Somerset. There he became the spirit behind a coalition of resistance formed by Xhosa chiefs who had reason to be disturbed by some of Somerset's arrangements. Ngqika had been

made a paramount chief of amaXhosa at the same time as he became 'umantshingilane' (security officer). Implications of the latter appointment were that, by a Spoorweg System, he would be responsible for recovering colonial stock supposedly stolen by amaXhosa from whatever chiefdom. This was an insult to chieftaincy, particularly when it affected paramountcy. A further implication of this new arrangement was that every Xhosa chief had been turned into 'umantshingilane'.

It was not long after that meeting that Nxele prepared an army of amaNdlambe for war against Ngqika. He was helped by other tribes, and shared the leadership of that army with Mdushane. At the battle of Amalinda in 1818, Ngqika who was helped by a colonial army under Brerenton, was defeated. Nxele proceeded to attack Grahamstown in 1819. Several casualties were sustained by both the sides. As a means to end the war Nxele handed himself over to the British. He was imprisoned on Robben Island, but died in 1812 while attempting an escape from there.

One of the points that this thesis makes is that frustration has been sustained and felt the most by those black Christians who had been, like Nxele, exposed the most to Western culture.<sup>40</sup>

It has devastated those people to discover that Christianity and civilization were not synonymous. Since the discovery African Christians have clamoured for Christianity to be de-Westernized, or de-hellenized. It is not by a deduction process that African



scholars have sought to make the church relevant to Africa. Through research they have struggled to rediscover the wealth of African culture.

#### NTSIKANA'S LIFE STORY

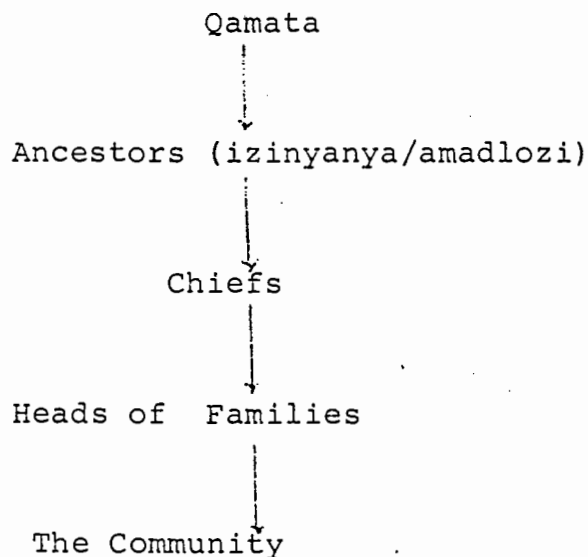
Ntsikana's life and, particularly his contribution to the cause of missionary work among amaXhosa of the early nineteenth century, is best appraised by way of drawing comparisons between his early and later lifestyles. Ntsikana who began life as umntu obomvu (red blanketed) and iqaba (uneducated) changed at some point and became a civilized Christian who, according to Western assessment was respectable.<sup>41</sup> Ntsikana who spent the major part of his early life in Xhosaland, had a predominantly rural background. He did not have the experience of life in the Colony as Nxele had. He was not 'ikhumsha' ('ikhumsha' as a designation referred to an African who was either Dutch or English speaking)<sup>42</sup> If any contact with European culture, this tended to be mediated to him by missionaries whom he met. We have no record of either Ntsikana or his father ever going out to work on a boer farm, as happened in Nxele's case. Lack of this particular experience is quite significant for the theme of this thesis. Ntsikana was firmly established in the culture of his people at the time of his conversion to Christianity.

Ntsikana's lifespan of about forty-one years (c 1780 - 1812 ) was fairly divided, with the first sector preoccupied with matters

of a purebred umXhosa, while the other accounted for what was a Xhosa Christian. Accordingly, the first twenty years of Ntsikana's life were typical of any young man of umNgqika. Heading of sheep, goats and cattle featured immensely here (ubesalusa impahla). Hunting was an important trade particularly in a country abounding in wild game (ubezingela). Skins of animals were a familiar mode of dress, but leopard and tiger skins were reserved for chiefs and principal councillors.<sup>43</sup> Red ochre was a recognised and acceptable ointment to use by all traditional Xhosa. There were ceremonial rituals that the community would observe seasonally or when there was need. What is important here though, is that those rituals were performed in the context of a cosmological world-view that presumed the mediating role of ancestors between people and Qamata. Ntsikana was quite convinced about the existence of ancestors. Ancestors were an important component in the African cultural milieu.

Ntsikana's society assumed a hierarchical arrangement where the community and family members were arranged on a high and low continuum. That social structure, apart from being patriarchal reflected a political system with paramountcy at the head. Following was a lower rank of subchiefs, district chiefs and councillors. Heads of families form the next stratum. The latter were above all recognised as heads of the religious system where they played an important role. This same hierarchical nature of the society of amaXhosa determined that Qamata should not be

approached directly but through other lesser divinities. After all, ordinary subjects approached the chief through his councillors. It was their duty to represent the interests of the subjects before the chief. This same order was followed in the dealings with uQamata. Here ancestors were the mediators. God was not worshipped, but revered and neither were the ancestors. What happened was that the ancestors were addressed when occasion demanded it. Dr Dwane who otherwise regrets this inaccessibility of God, points out that Qamata and the ancestors are, however, in the same spiritual realm. According to that authority the hierarchical world-view of amaXhosa takes the form: <sup>44</sup>



Stress is put on the otherness of Qamata, and any tendency to confuse God with people is avoided. Ancestors thus fill a vacuum that would otherwise exist between people and God. Again, God who is conceived of as utterly transcendent could hardly be subject to worship. Among Africans, worship is not an accept-

able term.<sup>45</sup> Also excluded here is the possibility of withdrawal into a cloister in retreat when one should have rectified matters by going out and talking to other people. The occasion of the slaughter of a beast as an offering of sacrifice has been identified as appropriate for addressing izinyanya. Such address of izinyanya has on the other hand ensured that communication channels among the members of the community were cleared.

Marriage was not only patriarchal among amaXhosa but patrilocal as well as patrilineal. The woman left her home for that of her husband. Matters of descendency were traced through the male line. Polygamy (isithembu) was practised by a large number of amaXhosa. The arrangement was sometimes not by choice but forced by circumstances. For example a widow of a child-bearing age would be taken over by an older or younger brother. The benefit that was derived from this arrangement was that of curbing prostitution especially among women. Women were used also in strategies to acquire allies. Daughters of allies would be married, or have their sons marry one's daughter. This happening in social systems that laid emphasis on extended families meant that ties of relationships were strengthened. There were specific roles within a household for the various wives to play.<sup>46</sup> The chief wife (umfazi omkhulu) was the real mother of the whole family. Following her was the second wife referred to as the right hand wife (umfazi wasekunene). This wife accompanied the husband on outings, particularly when going out to a tribal

dance (umdudo or umtshotsho). The third wife was called iqadi lendlu enkulu (the rafter of the first wife). She assisted the great or chief wife in all her undertakings. The fourth wife did the same with the right-hand wife. There were always present at home a number of women. At times, many of these turned into amadikazi akomkhulu (royal prostitutes) whose main business was to serve visitors to the kraal. What is important however is that each of the wives and children would be provided for in terms of land, cattle and sheep. The point I wish to make here is that Ntsikana had been so socialised into this social system as to find nothing wrong with it. He so identified with it that not long after circumcision he married Nontsonta who mothered Kobe and Nomanto who bore him Dukwana.<sup>47</sup> Even though this Xhosa social system was something Nxele and Ntsikana shared as common background, it is in the case of Ntsikana rather that it makes an outstanding impression by contrast. Nxele started in African culture and ended his life there. This was not so with Ntsikana for whom conversion to Christianity meant abandonment of what was traditional.

#### NTSIKANA'S ENCOUNTER WITH CHRISTIANITY

Therefore Ntsikana was deeply steeped in the traditional life of his people, amaXhosa, when he had his religious experiences. He was a traditional umXhosa who took great pride in his cattle which he would make the point to get up and admire early in the morning. This is typical behaviour among amaXhosa who have con-

tinued to rear cattle up to this day.<sup>48</sup> It was as Ntsikana indulged in that kind of behaviour that one morning he had hallucinations. Ntsikana's religious experience was in the mode of umXhosa. A ray of light seemed to strike the side of his favourite ox. That could not be observed by anyone else besides him. Later that day while involved in a tribal dance he felt restrained by some spirit. Every time he stood up to dance Ntsikana felt forced to sit down. Eventually, he decided to leave with his family, among whom would have been his right-hand wife. On the way and without warning to the rest of the party, Ntsikana stepped aside and washed off red ochre (imbola) from his body. In that symbolic manner he symbolised his departure from all that was traditional about him, something he himself did not realise at the time. On the other hand one cannot but agree with Peires's observation that there was nothing Christian about all that was happening to Ntsikana at that stage.<sup>49</sup> Rather the best that could be said is that at that time Ntsikana was being divinized (waye-thwasa). This happening at a time when missionary influence and presence was a reality in Ngqika's land, meant that Ntsikana would be prepared for his work by those west Christian missionaries. What was unfortunate though was that Christian missionaries emphasised conversion which to a large extent meant that one should depart from what was traditional. How missionaries succeeded in doing this with a number of amaXhosa becomes the next point to explore.

### VANDERKEMP'S INFLUENCE AMONG AMAXHOSA

It was in the year 1799 that the first missionaries of the London Missionaries Society arrived at the Cape. This pioneer group included Dr Johannes Theodorus VanderKemp. The company arrived with an already expressed purpose and that was to set up a Mission Station in Kaffirland, so called. It was not long after they had landed that VanderKemp accompanied by Edmonds and others travelled eastwards. They stopped at Graaff-Reinet on the way, which was where words of discouragement concerning their trip were expressed. The landdrost and the colonial community there were opposed to the intended missionary work among amaNgqika. The reason for that objection was that staying among amaNgqika were rebel boers who were hostile to the Cape British regime. The group were led by a certain Koenraad de Buys, who was later to make positive contributions to the cause of missionaries. However Koenraad de Buys was spending his time among amaNgqika soliciting the support of the whole amaRharhabe nation (i.e. amaNgqika and amaNdlambe together with their allies) in a battle he was planning against the British. Ngqika was opposed to such plans, but happy to let the whites continue to stay in his domain. While VanderKemp no doubt appreciated the concern by the community in Graaff-Reinet, he overruled their pleas of discouragement and continued with his journey to Xhosaland.

While Ngqika was prepared to allow this new wandering body of foreign Christians to stay in his kingdom, he opposed their intentions to set up a mission station quite vehemently. This

decision was not taken lightly. The chief had allowed himself time to discover what the implications of the new religion would be for the people. It was clear to him that matters of loyalty and allegiance to the throne would be highly tampered with, especially where emphasis was to be on proselytising individuals. This fear was confirmed by events taking place a few days after the missionaries had arrived. VanderKemp began to organise services of worship to which Khoi and amaXhosa women and children were attracted.<sup>50</sup> It should be noted that such worship services were a new phenomenon among amaXhosa. Koenraad de Buys and other boers soon joined VanderKemp for worship. The worship that VanderKemp and his group offered would be familiar to the boers. There was something common about the background of de Buys and VanderKemp. Both came from Holland originally, even though VanderKemp had come to South Africa under the auspices of the London Missionary Society. One might further say that it was as he discovered something about the identity of the boer rebels living among amaNgqika, that VanderKemp had made up his mind to work there in the first instant. Even though VanderKemp could not proceed with the plan to set up a Mission Station, he nevertheless managed to introduce quite a wide range of amaXhosa to Christianity. A new phenomenon was thus brought upon the life of amaXhosa, all happening in spite of all the objection from the authority of the people.

Not for too long could Ngqika resist giving the Christian missionaries official recognition. Koenraad de Buys who had



taken it upon himself to pressurise chief Ngqika to change his attitude towards the missionaries, threatened to persuade all the whites to leave. The threat was issued at a time when the presence of whites in a chiefdom was viewed as a status symbol by a number of tribes in the region. The king climbed down submitting to reproach by the boer rebel for all the vacillation.<sup>51</sup> VanderKemp was accorded rights to move freely not only among amaXhosa but also between the colony and Ngqika's land. In the short stay of a year among amaXhosa VanderKemp made a remarkable impression. Peires remarks how VanderKemp's influence extended beyond his short stay in Xhosaland, and that after he had left for Bethelsdorp, many, among whom was Ndlambe, visited him.<sup>52</sup> Thus Bethelsdorp although a Mission Station set up to serve the Khoi community, could not but maintain links with Xhosaland. There were at the same time, many amaXhosa living in the Qagqiwa area. Milton describes how best the contribution by VanderKemp to the Cape might be assessed. He says,

"Although VanderKemp's mission to Ngqika had failed, the words he preached were heard throughout the frontier. His mission station at Bethelsdorp had become, in the intervening years, the centre from which the teachings of Christianity had begun to spread among the Xhosa".<sup>53</sup>

#### MISSION STATIONS: BETHELSDORP

The decision that VanderKemp should leave Xhosaland and establish a Mission Station among the Khoi in Bethelsdorp was one forced on him by a purely political situation. It was something

arranged by the Cape Colonial Government who at the time were eager to use missionaries to help curb a revolt by Khoi farm servants. The Khoi who had otherwise been regarded as loyal protectors of whites had been heavily armed. Something more than ordinary arms had to be used to quell the situation. Grievances that Khoi farm labourers had against colonial powers had compelled the Khoi to join hands with amaXhosa in an uprising in 1799.<sup>54</sup> A desperate situation had arisen for the Khoi who were steadily losing large tracts of land to boer farmers. The whole situation constituted a serious security risk bound to cause alienation among large numbers of Khoi. Marginals were being created among the Khoi population on a very large scale. Emerging in that kind of circumstance the Bethelsdorp Mission Station, like all others to follow, was perceived a sophisticated camp where to horde those declared expendables in a political battle. According to Peires it was for a slightly different reason that such stations would be viewed, "Since most of the people attracted to Christianity in the early years were misfits and refugees from Xhosa justice, it would not be surprising

if the chiefs, like their colonial counterparts, regarded the missions as refugees for criminals and good-for-nothings."<sup>55</sup> Thus whether for good or bad reasons, the whole venture about Mission Stations was clouded in suspicion. There was an element of suspicion on the part of some government officials about some of the motives of the missionaries.

Both the Cape Government and even more the London Missionary Society acting through its agents, VanderKemp and Read, saw the civilising of the native as a priority in all their work. The mission station had to provide an arena where the Khoi and amaXhosa could be presented with alternative elements from Western Civilization. The missionaries often described the situation as that of giving the people the opportunity to elevate themselves so as to take their place in a free colonial society, on an equal basis.<sup>56</sup>

In line with the thinking, mission stations produced clerks, interpreters, catechists, nurses and civilized farm hands. In the same sense mission station would be prototypes of Native Reserves or homelands whose primary right of existence was to provide urban areas with a civilized and disciplined labour force.

Philip gives us insight as to how the missionary saw his role,

"His (the missionary's) labourers smooth the way for the triumph of science, increase the produce of the earth, by multiplying the hands employed in its cultivation; and create new demands for the manufacturers of his own country, while he is lessening the miseries of his fellow creatures, elevating savages and barbarians to a state of civilization, and cheering them with the hope of a life to come".<sup>57</sup>

The constant reference to the term elevate with regard to work that missionaries did among Khoi and amaXhosa, demonstrates how superior missionaries thought their culture to be compared to that of the natives. They saw their role as that of lifting

people out of a somewhat ruinous environment. This is what the missionaries understood civilization to mean. Things became even more complicated when the religious content was added to what was being done. Civilization was often equated with Christianity. The view was taken that whoever was converted should, among other things renounce his traditional practices. Whosoever desired to progress in life had to begin by disposing of his culture, which was seen to be a hindrance. This view has persisted up to the present day. Delivering a paper in a seminar at Fort Hare University last year, Prof A Kriel, speculating on a return to traditional ways among amaXhosa, said, "A similar problem arises when a patient treated with modern medicine falls back on traditional medical treatment if recovery appears too dilatory. And one could just imagine what would happen if a farmer should decide to fight inflation by using marginal fertility rites rather than fertilizer. And what would happen if a factory manager on finding the machinery grinding to a standstill, should call in a diviner? How much work will be done in some factories if all those who suffer ritual impurity had to avoid touching certain objects or going round others and stepping over a third group? For this is what it would mean to go back to symbolism which forms the basis of serious traditional African thought". This situation that Prof Kriel is referring to would occur only if it were possible for African culture to remain static in spite of involvement with surrounding modern cultures. These are cultures which Africans interact

with every day of their lives. Fortunately there are no precedents for such insulation. Social scientists have not provided data to prove that some cultures have a way of surviving in the manner he suggests. It has been discovered that there is a dynamic element to every culture that exists.

Although the colonial government, the farm boer and the missionary could agree on civilization as desirable for both amaXhosa and the Khoi, they however could not agree on how to achieve that. The government and farmer imagined that natives could pick up civilization naturally through their involvement in service on farms or in industry. The missionary, on the other hand, saw civilization as an inevitable product of Christianity. By this he meant that as people became more and more involved with Christianity, the devastation of African polity and economy would be expedited. Here the missionary was particularly bent on displacing the roles of the chiefs and inyangas in African tribes.<sup>59</sup> He had identified those functionaries as a hindrance to progress by any group that continued to believe in their power. So with more conversions to Christianity those roles might collapse. Dr Dwane regrets the fact that it ever was envisaged that African culture might collapse.<sup>60</sup>

*AB*  
In urging for the retention of African culture as African theologians seem to do, they are not in the least disputing the fact of the existence of a difference between African and Western

culture. Rather the plea is for a reconciliation of the two, as far as possible. It should be realised that the individualistic nature of the economic ideology of Western culture will ever pose itself a problem for the African. This is all because African culture does not have anything to compare with it. Instead, as we saw in earlier chapters, the economy of a communal society such as amaXhosa had tended to centre around their chiefs and iinyanga. It is possible that Ntsikana saw the difference of this disparity quite early. He is supposed to have encouraged people to receive the Bible (umqulu) from the people from abroad, but should have nothing to do with their money (iqosha elingenamngxuma = a button without a whole).<sup>61</sup> Many presently attribute the political problems to the fact that Ntsikana's warning was not heeded. How far amaXhosa could survive without recourse to Western economy would be the question. The Western economic ideology is one that had made Western society very powerful. Relying on that power it sought to transform all social institutions that were alien. Such a transformation affected mainly the educated, civilized and converted Africans. Those Africans who saw themselves as elevated began to regard their cultural identity with shame. Desmond Tutu describes what happened in this way when he says, "The worst crime that can be laid at the door of the white man.....is that his policy succeeded in filling most of us with a self-disgust and self-hatred - the most violent form of colonialism - spiritual and mental enslavement, mental or spiritual schizophrenia."<sup>62</sup> It cannot be denied that this became the position of Ntsikana throughout his life as a Christian.

## MISSIONARY THEOLOGICAL OUTLOOK AT VARIANCE WITH AFRICAN RELIGIOUS OUTLOOK

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In complex societies as Britain was in the 18th and 19th centuries, it was inevitable that there should have been no comprehensive theological outlook.<sup>63</sup> There was in existence a number of what could be called theological expressions of Christianity. Among such expressions as could be found in Europe, even though called by different names, was the Evangelical. Missionaries tended to come from this sector of Christian opinion. Among the Evangelicals there was laid emphasis on the description of the nature of God. This disposition determined that all teaching and preaching should focus on the attributes of God. People were preoccupied with finding answers to the question, "who is God?". The underlying Newtonian cosmology of the European culture determined that these people should conceive the universe as physically stratified and following certain laws laid down by some omnipotent God.<sup>64</sup> This stratification tended to be associated with physical attributes such as colour and sex. Europeans saw themselves as superior to all else that was not white. Secondly, the kind of view that Europeans had about the universe determined that they should have a polygimist view of life. The implication here was that it proved almost impossible for people to accept humanity as descended from a common ancestor.<sup>65</sup> What was propounded by this view ultimately was

that whites and blacks could not have the same God. Missionaries did what was possible during their time among the natives to emphasise the brotherhood of the human race, something they did against terrible odds. But even for them there were problems, particularly as they could not be convinced about the presence of God among the natives. This led a number of missionaries to draw the conclusion that Africans do not have a God.

Scripture was a point of departure for all theologising among Evangelical Christians. Matters of Orthodoxy particularly when it came to the interpretation of biblical texts were a preoccupation for Evangelicals. Such use of Scripture as a point of departure meant on the other hand that doctrinal issues such as Creation, Sin, Salvation, Resurrection, etc, should feature prominently in their theology. According to the evangelicals, Man as a fallen creature needed to be redeemed. We have had the same emphasis on the fallenness of man represented in the 20th Century by no less eminent theologians as Karl Barth.<sup>66</sup> It has been that rather too much emphasis on the fallenness of man that has created a barrier between Orthodox Christianity and African Theology. It is worse when the fallenness of man is presented in individualistic terms. Sin among amaXhosa is always examined in relation to its implications for one's fellow men or neighbours. Dr Dwane has provided in this respect a catalogue of items that amaXhosa have come to realise as sinfull. These are,



- |                                 |                                            |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|
| 1. Ubugwenxa or into etenxileyo | Not consistent with accepted norms.        |
| 2. Ubumene-mene                 | A despicable liar.                         |
| 3. Inkohlakalo                  | Wickedness/Cruelty (inkohla - puzzle)      |
| 4. Okungendawo                  | Behaviour that is hateful to man and gods. |
| 5. Ihlazo, isikizi, inyala      | Gross, unforgivable scandal. <sup>67</sup> |

According to this view sin was tied up with the violation of other people's lives and property. This comes very close to Prof Setiloane's contribution which asserts the personhood of an African depends on others.<sup>68</sup> Relationships not only with one's God, but with others is of vital importance. An attitude of asceticism should not act as a substitute. The number of times one made his communion should not make up for the shortcomings in social relationships.

Among Christian missionaries there was an exceptional emphasis on the nuclear family rather than the extended. This was for two reasons. Firstly 17th and 18th century Europe had by immorality undermined the sanctity of marriage. Secondly, evangelicals as we have pointed out, came from a capitalist background, where focus was on the individual. There was keen competition as everyone strove to amass rather scarce values for himself and off-spring. Also the nuclear family seemed to provide

here the proper and natural place for women and children.<sup>69</sup> We have already discussed how African polygamy was practised, and that it was for very good reasons. It is still a question among African theologians whether polygamy was not in fact a much more Christian practice of marriage.

#### DIVERGENT RELIGIOUS RESPONSES BY NXELE AND NTSIKANA:

In chapter two of this thesis a point is made that the differing attitudes of Nxele and Ntsikana accounted for the divergence in their religious outlook. To Nxele land was a sacred possession in that it belonged to divinity ultimately. For that reason land could not be given away, and thus be out of the control of the chief who was conceived as the living isinyanya (ancestor). This attitude of safeguarding what belonged to izinyanya meant that Nxele would be jealous when it came to African religious rituals, the majority of which bore a reference to land and fertility. Western Christianity was conceived as dangerous by Nxele in so far as it threatened to cause a division between him and izinyanya. For Nxele religion embraced such elements as land possession and the political life of people. In fact African traditional religion is so tied up with matters of land possession and politics as to warrant no distraction even in description. Nxele and the rest of amaNdlambe had for religious reasons decided not to leave the Zuurveld even when Europeans had declared the Fish river as the boundary.

Ntsikana who on becoming a Christian had ceased to attach im-

portance to his traditional religion, went further to give in to European political pressure. In chapter five it was pointed how Ntsikana agreed to leave Mankazana when he was advised to do so by Rev. Brownlee. He would not resist the move, arguing on grounds of his obligations to izinyanya as umXhosa, and that the link with them would be destroyed. Therefore it is evident that Ntsikana's religious outlook ran contrary to that of Nxele. His lack of emphasis on his traditional religion had made Ntsikana very popular among Western scholars. He has been commended by these scholars as a good example of an African Christian pacifist. Ntsikana who as a counsellor to chief Ngqika shared in the political life of the Ngqika nation always took a decisive stand on resistance to war. Peires has indicated that it was for religious reasons that Ntsikana assumed that position. He saw submission to the will of God, where alone peace and protection were to be found as answers to the problem of stress.<sup>70</sup> In this thesis, while it is appreciated that Ntsikana heard the Gospel and sought conversion to Christianity, it is found questionable that his involvement with that religion should account for a radical omission in his religious life. He failed to see politics and religion as belonging together.

The two strands of religious viewpoints as represented by Nxele and Ntsikana are therefore diametrically opposed to each other. True to their perspectives of God where he was conceived as either in heaven or on earth, the iinyanga could not agree on the question of the world as the arena of God's activity. Further the positions of the iinyanga could

not be reconciled, especially where non-involvement in struggles to regain land, was posed as a condition of being a good Christian. It is becoming clear that Christianity will only be African on fully identifying with the position of Nxele. Incarnation here will require that Christianity identifies with what are identified as essential components in African religion. It will no doubt be discovered here that land was at the centre.

Ever since the nineteenth century which is when Christianity was introduced among amaXhosa, there has been a vacillation by the majority of Xhosa converts between the position of Ntsikana and that of Nxele. African customs have been performed by practising Xhosa Christians and izinyanya have been invoked on such occasions. This has happened in spite of a hostile disposition of the church regarding 'amasiko and izithethe' (customs and tradition). That cannot be anything other than identification with Nxele. In other circles one has encountered opposition to any reference to ancestors. Some amaXhosa strongly feel that the association with ancestors that someone might claim deducts from their standing as Christian.

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It can be of interest to note what happened to Dukwana one of the sons of Ntsikana. Even though he came from a family that was loyal to the colonial government, Dukwana did not maintain that reputation. Having gone through the elite Zonnebloem institution where he gained qualifications to be an interpreter and clerk, Dukwana acted as a lay preacher at Mgwali (near

Stutterheim). When war broke out between whites and blacks i.e. the war of Ngcayecibi 1877-78, Dukwana joined the black rebels, and went to live in the bush.<sup>72</sup> He fought on the side of Sandile and proved an excellent marksman accounting for many white casualties. During his time in the field however, Dukwana continued to conduct Christian services. This happened for he recognised that Christianity as a religion was not antagonistic to struggles of survival. It is possible to fight for one's land while continuing to be a Christian. Dukwana is recorded as having said that he was not fighting against Christianity or civilization but against the English who had robbed his people of their land.<sup>73</sup>

Later in this thesis we shall discover how the two strands represented by Nxele and Ntsikana have become more sophisticated, and given rise to the Black and African expressions of Christian theology. While Black theology is traceable to the United States of America, African theology originates in Africa.

FOOTNOTES

1. Michael J. Ashley, "Universes in Collision" Journal of Theology for Southern Africa September, 1980 p 28
2. Hodgson, "Study of the Xhosa Prophet Nxele" p11
3. Peires, "Nxele, Ntsikana and Origins" p 52
4. The calculation is in proportion to the numbers comprising each side
5. J. Du Plessis, A History of Christian Mission in South Africa Cape Town: Struik, 1965 p 54
6. Crehan, "Ideology and Practice" p 1
7. It is an important question to this study whether structures designed for a Western form of Christian religion can ever be truly indigenized. Will the European structures yield to an African form of Christianity?
8. Crehan, "Ideology and Practice"
9. Hodgson, "A study of the Xhosa Prophet Nxele" p 12
10. MacLennan, A Proper Degree of Terror p 186
11. During fieldwork I discovered that no exception is taken by congregations if someone known to be ingqira (diviner) went to church. Christians consult the traditional doctor even on

matters affecting spiritual life. This is so in a rural situation such as Peddie as it is in an urban situation such as Mdantsane.

12. MacLennan, A Proper Degree of Terror p 187

13. CO2603 - Read to Cuyler, 18 May 1816

14. No doubt this was a religious experience. Whether that could be considered a criterion for being a Christian is doubtful.

15. Peires, "NXELE, NTSIKANA AND ORIGINS" p 56

16. Letter from J. Read, 31 May 1816 Transaction IV p 284

Holt, JOSEPH WILLIAMS p 26

17. R. Stark et al, Society Today New York: C.R.M. Books, 1973 p 531

18. Hodgson, "A Study of the Xhosa Prophet Nxele" p 12

19. Ibid., p 12

20. Bonganjalo Goba, "An African Christian Theology" Journal Theology for Southern Africa No. 26, March 1979

21. C.W. Smith, The Meaning and End of Religion Great Britain: S.P.C.K., 1962 p 25

22. K. Nurnberger, "The Sotho Notion of the Supreme Being and the Impact of the Christian Proclamation." Journal of Religion in Africa September 1974

23. Peires, "NXELE, NTSIKANA AND ORIGINS" p 57

24. Hodgson, "A Study of the Xhosa Prophet Nxele" p 11

A.S. De Villiers, Robben Island Cape Town: Struik, 1971 p 36

25. My inquiry has not borne much fruit as people simply say TAYi TAYi was a black version of Jesus Christ. Also it comes very close to Toyi - Toyi the war - cry of the present day black youth.

26. Nurnberger, "The Sotho Notion of the Supreme Being" p 193

27. J.A. Nxumalo, "Christ and Ancestors in the African World" Journal of Theology for Southern Africa No. 32, September 1980

28. S. Dwane, "Christianity in relation to Xhosa Religion" p 12

29. Lecture by Gabriel M. Setiloane on Supreme Being, University of Cape Town: 29 May 1986

30. Mgotsi, "Ukuthwasa" pp 73 - 74

31. Kaye Ms

32. Peires, The House of Phalo p 71



33. This situation compares very closely with that of chief Sechele who Setiloane refers to in his book *Image of God among Sotho - Tswana*.
34. A. Cabral, "National Liberation and Culture", Ayo L. Langley, Ideologies of Liberation in Black Africa London: Rex Collings, 1979 p 709
35. Hodgson, "A Study of the Xhosa Prophet Nxele" p 19
36. Peires, The House of Phalo pp 69 - 70
37. Ibid., p 70
38. A. Mafeje, "Religion, Class and Ideology in South Africa", David Philip, Religion and Social Change in southern Africa Cape Town: Balkema, 1975 p 165
39. Peires, The House of Phalo p 70
40. Setiloane, "Where are we in African Theology?" Kofi Appiah - Kubi, *African Theology en route* New York: Orbis Books, 1979 pp 59 - 68
41. Bokwe, NTSIKANA: p 1
42. Urbanised blacks invariably designated 'amarumsha' are regarded with great suspicion by those with a rural background. In early days the ability to speak a European language was usually taken as indication of having European ways.

43. Bokwe, NTSIKANA p 1
44. Dwane, "Christianity in relation to Xhosa Religion" p 12
45. Nxumalo, "Christ and Ancestors" p 9
46. Mgotsi, "Ukuthwasa" pp 11 - 13
47. Bokwe, NTSIKANA p 7
48. My experience gained through living among cattle rearing amaXhosa in Peddie, Middledrift and Umtata has been convincing in this respect.
49. Peires, The House of Phalo p 72
50. A.D. Martin, Dr, Vander Kemp London: Westminster, 1932  
p 87
51. Ibid., p 87
52. Peires, The House of Phalo p 77
53. Milton, Edges of War p 66
54. Du Plessis, A History of Christian Mission p 122
55. Peires, The House of Phalo p 76
56. Crehan, "Ideology and Practice" p 11

57. John Philip, 1828 Researcher in South Africa London:  
J. Duncan
58. A Kriel, "The African Identity and the Gospel" Theological Seminar Fort Hare University: 11 June 1981
59. Peires, The House of Phalo p 76
60. Dwane, "Christianity in relation to Xhosa Religion" p 1
61. This is one of Ntsikana legends found during research among amaXhosa of the Eastern Cape.
62. Desmond M. Tutu, "Black Theology/African Theology - Soul-mates or Antagonists?" J.H. Cone and G.S. Wilmore, Black Theology New York: Orbis Books, 1979 p 484
63. Ashley, "Universes in Collision" p 29
64. Ibid., p 29
65. William Shaw, The Story of My Mission London: Hamilton and Adams, 1860 p 444
66. Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics 1.2. Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, p 303
67. Dwane, "Christianity and Xhosa Religion" p 41
68. Setiloane, "Confessing Christ Today" Journal of Theology for Southern Africa No. 12 September 1975

69. Crehan "Ideology and Practice" p 9
70. Peires, The House of Phalo p 73
71. Nxumalo, "CHRIST AND ANCESTORS IN THE AFRICAN WORLD" p 21  
"Care should be taken in approaching or people in relation to  
this subject of ancestors. Africans, in relation to beliefs and  
especially to traditional religion do not constitute a homoge-  
nous group".
72. Spier, "The War of Ngcayecibi 1877 - 8" M.A. Thesis,  
Rhodes University, February 1978 p 158
73. Ms 14254/13: Burton IV Appendix XIII  
Lecture by Rev Johnson  
Port Elizabeth  
Cory Library

## CHAPTER 7

UNDERSTANDING THE ENCOUNTER WITH AND THE RESPONSES TO THE MISSIONARIES

For our understanding of some of the implications of the encounter between the diviners and missionaries, we rely on insights availed to us by sociological scholarship. For example, Peter Berger referred in this respect to a meeting between two 'symbolic universes'.<sup>1</sup> He indicated that in the coming together of any two cultures, two bodies of theoretical tradition intergrated different provinces of meaning. AmaXhosa attached to reality a meaning that was decidedly different from that of their European counterparts. There was a difference in meaning in so far as the two traditions resulted from cultural histories that were different. This study demonstrates how Christianity and African traditional religion as symbolic universes have in practice ignored the existence of each other. Not much progress has been made in integrating the two universes. There has been lack of sensitivity to what African religion is about. And that is found regrettable.

As the study is focussed rather on matters of knowledge and belief, the approach adopted here is epistemological.<sup>2</sup> Cognisance is given to the fact that the iinyanga and missionaries were meeting on ground that Westerners labelled religious.<sup>3</sup> AmaXhosa realised the ultimate religious nature of the meeting as well, hence they attached so much importance to the role of iinyanga. Among all human groups iinyanga have gained importance especially when it came to formulating social reality. Their role was emphasised even more when it came to deciding the destinies of

their respective nations. At the same time iinyanga provided for the maintenance of the cosmological structures in their respective communities of existence

Therefore it was inevitable that the experience of competition, contravention and conflict as sustained by amaXhosa in the early nineteenth century would accentuate the roles of iinyanga.<sup>4</sup>

Yet Europe failed to recognise the signs of religion in Africa. Early nineteenth century Europe saw Africa as heathen and virtually sunk in darkness.<sup>6</sup> On encountering in Africa a social and political order that was different from theirs, Europeans sought to destroy it. African diviners were accorded a similar treatment. The strategy was that of exploding their power by undermining them. As Westerners failed to recognise the importance of iinyanga within the African social system, these were not regarded with any seriousness. There was no expectation of any positive contribution from the African to what Christianity had as a concern.<sup>7</sup> This situation determined that evangelization amongst Africans would involve an imposition of a European cultural symbolic universe. This involved among other things the substitution of priests, doctors and teachers for izanuse, amaxhwele and amakhankatha (general practitioners, herbalists and wardens at initiations schools for boys and girls). Rendered helpless by the pressures of a military and political nature of the time, amaXhosa found themselves faced with a situation where they had to effect adjustments in their lives.<sup>8</sup> They had

to find means of coping with the European invasion not only on their land as simply a geographical area, but above it all, their cosmological world-view. There were only two alternatives between which to choose, and these were submission or resistance.

It is worth observing that when reference is made to African Culture or African Symbolic Universe, it is not a single and homogeneous entity. African culture allows for a variety of expressions, sometimes among the people of the same community. Within the same tribe, various clans will offer sacrifice in ways that will be noticeably different. This same variety in culture has persuaded others, according to Dr Zvomonondita Kurewa, to raise the question, whether we should not be talking about African theologies.<sup>9</sup> This issue has been raised because it has been recognised that in some situations, the need has been for certain components of the Christian faith to be emphasised more than others. This has been because of expressed demands within the context of theologising. This phenomenon should not have been encountered as strange to Western Christianity. For example within the Anglican Communion there have existed the Catholic and the Evangelical traditions side by side, and that for almost two centuries.<sup>10</sup> This situation has existed because of historical and theological reasons. The Old Testament provides another example. Because of historical experiences there are found to exist among the Israelites different expressions of their religion. There are variations between Israelites that had had the re-

religious experience of Mount Sinai, as against those that experienced God through involvement in the Exodus event.<sup>11</sup> The slight difference between the way Professor Setiloane expounds the concept of God among Sotho-Tswana and the explanation of the same concept among amaXhosa, might be possible to explain in social or historical terms.

The purpose of acceptance of the above postulation is to persuade one to accommodate the difference religiously between amaNdlambe and amaNgqika as prompted by socio-political experience. AmaNdlambe who were far more rooted in their culture than amaNgqika, tended to be hostile to Christianity. The two groups had originated from the same stock of amaRharhabe, yet amaNgqika emerged rather as a force determined to oppose or depose Ndlambe and could not quite have a firm footing. Their cultural attachment could not be as firm as that of AmaNdlambe. In the first chapter of this study we demonstrated how the taboo of the Thuthula debacle had somehow brought Ngqika down in the eyes of the nation of amaRharhabe. The event had caused a number of tribes to side with Ndlambe. Ngqika had incurred 'umbulo'<sup>12</sup> (taboo) which meant that even the ancestors had turned their backs against him. According to what is said here, it is possible to argue that Ngqika had become marginal, particularly where the standards of his people were used. Nxele and Ntsikana were of course affected by the vicissitudes of the groups to which they belonged. In keeping with the general attitude of amaNdlambe who emphasised African culture and religion, Nxele was hostile to Christianity. Ntsikana who was um-



Ngqika was more susceptible to Christian influence. The fact that his mother had been smelt out as a witch would have affected Ntsikana. He had become what some people might call, 'ithole legqwira' (the calf of a witch). In this chapter the argument is not simply to establish why there were these variations in the religious life of amaXhosa, but also to establish them as natural phenomena.

What is important for us here is that the difference in religious expressions among amaXhosa would have accounted for a dynamism in the life of those people. The two opposing views advocated by the diviners provided for creativity in the shaping of the history of their people. There was scope for competition as well as opposition with others.<sup>13</sup> In the competition that involved amaXhosa in a pursuit of two divergent strands, Nxele and Ntsikana were engaged on the different sides, yet very much part of the history of their people.<sup>14</sup> At the centre of the controversy among the two were their differing attitudes to warfare. The difference, especially where it touched on matters dealing with their religion, helped on the one hand to demonstrate that there was nothing immutable about their religion. Ntsikana convinced though he was about moral values that the Christian religion sought to uphold, was able to defend Ngqika when the latter was accused of incest.<sup>15</sup> In this incident one senses an element of religious freedom among amaXhosa. We have no record of a nation taking up arms against another simply to convert them, or to

thwart conversions. By the beginning of the nineteenth century amaXhosa were still experiencing independence economically and politically. Plenty of food and cattle and land meant that differing groups could be tolerant and patient with one another.

#### XHOSA LIFE AS A PILGRIMAGE IN TIME

Even though it is an accepted view in this work that the African and European societies with whom we deal, were heterogenous as well as in a state of flux, here we treat them as 'uniform and static abstractions'.<sup>16</sup> In our analysis of these abstractions, we rely conceptually on three assumptions as offered by Berger about the cultural heritage of any nation or community. The three assumptions affect three phases in time; the past, the present and the future.<sup>17</sup> According to this view the past has something to do with a 'memory' that is shared by all socialised into a collectivity, be they tribe or nation. People must know something about their past, and that knowledge is somewhat enshrined in religiosity. There is something religious about the cultural history of any given community. Part of being human involves a consciousness about a past, where there is realization that others have gone before the present generation. This awareness has made demands on African societies to provide for incorporation of the ancestors in their cosmological world-view. After all, all societies practice one form of ancestor worship or the other.<sup>18</sup> Tributes whether in the form of civic or religious rituals have been paid to national heroes by all nations. There is always pressure for the present generation to conserve what has been inherited from the past.

The present has been realised as meaning that the participants were engaged in the current historic processes. Even though it is accepted that the education or socialisation of the young should involve an appropriation of material from past generations, it is nevertheless heeded that there should be dialogue with that heritage. Those that are being socialised have the responsibility of ensuring that this happened. Otherwise we should have what Freire has called 'the banking concept of Education'.<sup>19</sup> In this concept those who are being socialised are presumed to have nothing to offer and are simply there to be filled up. The assumption is that those to be educated are either incapable of perceiving what is offered, or are simply stupid. The present maintains on the other hand a link with both the past and the future; the predecessors and successors. Through these means the finitude of the present individual existence is transcended.<sup>20</sup> In other words, it is not possible for one to live as though one had no past, except if he is a lunatic. Every individual who is in his right senses lives the present in full consciousness of the past. Important for the present also, is a utopian content which ever points to the future.<sup>21</sup> The possibility of effecting a breakthrough in the face of what might be inhibiting has importance for present living. It is possible to analyse the event of Gompo where Nxele focused on the resurrection of warriors that had died in former battles. Historians have often failed to fully comprehend what happened there. For some scholars the fact the former warriors did not physically rise was indicative

of either failure or a deliberate misleading of the people by a prophet. The Gomo event did not detract from the spiritual beliefs of amaNdlambe even though Nxele had promised something so impossible.<sup>22</sup> He was in a sense making a breakthrough in a situation of a crisis. As inyanga it was his responsibility to help the community cope with their predicament. This was not a flight from reality either.

The third assumption that Berger refers to is the future. The future with its focus on a new reality rather than simply time, is realised as ideally 'open'. The openness affects the manner in which new converts or young members are allowed scope to make their unique contribution to what has always been. The implication for the Christian religion in nineteenth century Eastern Cape is that, in order that this faith should be experienced as valid as well as meaningful, amaXhosa needed to have options to make contributions. Without that possibility there simply was no chance for them to be engaged existentially. Advocated in this study is a situation very much in line with the philosophy of Hegel about thesis, antithesis and synthesis.<sup>23</sup> In a situation where these stages had been followed the new reality that should then emerge would bear qualities that the initiate or convert will identify as originating in him. Where there is suppression of creativity and imagination on the part of the convert false consciousness exists. It is my ardent belief that Christianity was experienced as a false consciousness by amaXhosa of

the nineteenth century.<sup>24</sup> It was introduced among those people as a body of complete ideas or information, which amaXhosa had to either take or leave. Elphick has pointed out that missionaries literally invaded South Africa with a well-articulated programme.<sup>25</sup> There was very little that amaXhosa could do by way of bringing Christianity into line with what had always been religious reality in Xhosaland. AmaXhosa were obliged to adapt themselves to the new reality, as prescribed by Western Christianity.

#### THE ARENA OF MEETING IINYANGA AND THE MISSIONARIES

The account given in the thesis about the meeting of iinyanga (the diviners) and the missionaries, is in terms of the sociology of knowledge. Recognition is thereby given to the close and inextricable relationship that is known to exist between society and religion.<sup>26</sup> What should be important for us to do as far as the Cape society was concerned, is survey the socio-political scene. Among factors influencing the social life of both the white and black communities of the Cape was land gain for one group and land dispossession for the other. The Cape Colonial Government's influence increased as more and more land was brought under white control. There was a large white farming community around Algoa Bay, and these people had considerable influence on government policy. At the same time the gain of land by whites meant loss of land by both the Khoikhoi and amaXhosa. Traditional Khoikhoi kingdoms began to collapse approximately in the middle of the eighteenth century.<sup>27</sup> The

consequence of that collapse was that the Khoikhoi began to offer their labour to boer farmers. Amaxhosa followed suit in this respect, even though this happened at a slower pace than that of the Khoikhoi, for there was a strong Xhosa resistance to this tendency. But the native communities experienced social destabilisation from their land. The alienation from land did not always take place by war but sometimes it was by subtle diplomatic coercion.<sup>28</sup> Sometimes it took African communities long periods before they realised that the land they occupied no longer belonged to them. Ashley's claim about stability among amaxhosa in the early nineteenth century is disputable.<sup>29</sup> And for that same reason it proved impossible for the cosmological world-view of amaxhosa to absorb alien people. Whites on the other hand resisted incorporation into black kingdoms. They might have some form of association with amaxhosa, particularly on occasions of troubles with their own kin. The case of Koenrad de Buys and company who lived among amaNgqika is a good example here. Rather Europeans made it their business to destabilise African Kingdoms for they perceived them as a hindrance to civilization.

It would be true therefore to say that Christianity was experienced by the nineteenth century amaxhosa as the religion of a powerful foreign nation. This same nation made inroads into their land and played havoc on their culture and history, where destruction was incurred. Amaxhosa were no match for the Europeans who were experienced not only in intertribal but international wars.

Militarily they were prepared and had possession of sophisticated armoury. The expulsions from the Zuurveld which happened between 1811 and 1812, had a devastating effect on amaXhosa, particularly as they took the form of a war of attrition.<sup>30</sup> It is with regard to that bitter experience that the understanding of Christianity by amaXhosa should be examined. This situation determined that there would be conflict among amaXhosa, because a religion that emphasised values such as love and humility was responsible for destruction in their lives and was very powerful.<sup>31</sup> It was almost inevitable that the suspicion that the Christian religion was a ploy to encourage subservience among the natives would occur. Herein lies the problem with presentations of conversions as in free and relaxed atmosphere. There was deprivation of that kind of atmosphere for the African as he came into contact with Christianity. War and conflict which had become the determining factors in the relationship of blacks and whites accounted for hostility in all contacts among the races. For the same reason the iinyanga, the religious representatives of amaXhosa could not have experienced the meetings with missionaries as free especially when the proceedings were influenced by European political power. Therefore it was impossible for them to meet as equals, so long as western culture was the norm. Despair in this regard caused Nxele to abandon efforts to convince whites by argument. It was then that he decided to fight for the religious liberation of amaXhosa.

Even if iinyanga and missionaries could be brought together in a common ministry of the Church, that would not help for reconciliation, so long as the Christian practice ignored African culture. To refer to a point made above, a need for Nxele and Ntsikana to experience Christianity as valid would have still persisted. They would be more at home existentially only when the ground on which they stood was one that they could fully identify with as Africans. What they would have inherited from the past generations would need to be appreciated. They would on the other hand have needed certain guarantees about the future of their progeny. There was no possibility of this happening in a church that maintained a loyalty to its colonial source of origin.

Neither could the difference between the missionary universe and the universe of amaXhosa be reconciled by simply recruiting individuals.<sup>32</sup> Nxele and VanderKemp, it should be accepted, represented universes that were not just different but diametrically opposed to one another on very crucial points. For example the idea of conversion of an individual was something that the African community would never imagine. Every person had his place in the community, and without that community one was practically non-existent. Being an outcast was a state most dreaded among amaXhosa for among them "umntu ngumntu ngabanye abantu" (a person is a person through other people). Nxele and Ntsikana had each a place within their Xhosa cosmological world. They belonged there and neither conversion to Christian nor derogatory dismissals



such as 'Ukuza kukaNxele' (the coming of Nxele) can successfully blot Nxele from the African scene.<sup>33</sup> This saying remains foreign to the soul of amaXhosa, as was influenced by a nineteenth century missionary outlook. Up to the hour of his death Nxele had otherwise faithfully remained 'umntwana wegazi' ( a blood brother).<sup>34</sup> This should not only be realised but also respected. It should at the same time be realised that VanderKemp occupied among his people a position comparable to that of Nxele among amaXhosa. Negative references to missionaries in the company of the most liberal and enlightened South Africans of European origin are best tolerated than accepted.<sup>34</sup> My point here is that there was no need for either Ntsikana nor Nxele to be persuaded to abandon their culture at the point where they were converted. That they ever felt a need to be incorporated into a foreign religion, is an issue that remains questionable. The collapse in them religiously is explainable only in political terms. It was as their plausibility structures collapsed that amaXhosa were rendered susceptible to Christian influence.<sup>35</sup> Their conversion was by conquest rather than conviction.

#### CHRISTIANITY AS IDEOLOGY

If there is agreement that in Xhosaland Christian missionaries exploited to their advantage a socio-political situation that existed in the nineteenth century, and if we should determine that missionaries identified with the dominant white power of the time, then we shall have established that missionaries operated within an ideological framework.<sup>36</sup> Faithfulness to

this assertion by Boesak makes it possible for us to argue that missionaries had an ideology, because they operated in a way that benefitted as well as consolidated a European imperialistic power structure. Christianity served the purpose of idealising western civilization.<sup>37</sup> This suggestion is further confirmed by Crehan. She comments in her work on the way in which any journal or pamphlet by a nineteenth century missionary equated Christianity with western civilization.<sup>38</sup> Even where there was no clear claim of the indissoluble link, it was obvious that it formed the background.

Because Western Christianity was ideologically faithful to its source of origin, it had little chance to be sensitive to its African cultural host. In fact as an ideology it had very little scope in which to accommodate anything that was different. It was 'culture - bound' and therefore regarded West European culture as perfect.<sup>39</sup> This belief in its perfection was according to Boesak reinforced by prejudices and cliches.<sup>40</sup> Prejudice determined that missionaries should regard peculiarities of strange and unfamiliar cultures as deviant definitions of reality.<sup>41</sup>

We have established already that according to western society the individual is the basic unit of society. Emphasis was therefore on private ownership of property. However, both these were foreign concepts to amaXhosa whose cosmological world view accounts for a communal base for society. A myth accounting for the origin of men in African saw men, women and children as origina-

ting together from a hole called 'Uhlanga'. William Shaw summed up how missionaries understood their role in Xhosaland: 'The light of traditional knowledge concerning god and moral subjects has been growing more and more dim, till we at length found them in a state of almost total darkness. Through such a succession of dreary ages, groping their way in constantly increasing obscurity, can we wonder if we now find them very far gone from righteousness?'<sup>42</sup>

#### UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE OF MISSION STATIONS

Success in the missionary enterprise was gauged on the number of conversions and the moral quality of converts.<sup>43</sup> As we can imagine unsuccessful overtures at potential converts by missionaries would have been cause for a tremendous frustration. This was certainly the case among the Khoikhoi because they were nomadic by nature. Further their mobility was accelerated through a sense of insecurity as more and more of their land was encroached upon by whites.<sup>44</sup> There was another source of frustration for the missionaries and that involved failure to gain full acceptance by African communities. This resistance found expression not only in refusals to grant missionaries sites on which to build, but even where the grant was made, mission stations could only be built outside traditional villages.<sup>45</sup> This served the purpose of keeping the missionary out of involvement in the social life of the village. His chances of interference with the social life of the community were limited in this respect.

As another means of limiting missionary influence among members of the tribe, the missionaries were denied opportunities of proselytising among the royal household.<sup>46</sup> Their converts comprised mainly of marginals, , with amaMfengu, amaGqunukhwebe and Khoi-khoi providing the highest number. On the whole there was fear and suspicion among amaXhosa for the power missionaries seemed to have over their converts. They were known to effect tremendous changes of a dramatic charismatic nature in their converts. It was because of the effect of that same power that Ntsikana broke off from the traditional tribal life when he became a Christian.

\* The break had been obvious at those points where the diviner preached against the accepted norms of his society. This we have already referred to in previous chapters.

There is no unanimity among scholars as to the success or failure of the missionary enterprise in South Africa. With numbers and percentages as the criterion, it is possible to accept that there was success. But the consensus of opinion among a large number of people, and these include some missionaries, is that the whole venture met with failure. Even though missionaries had managed to fill mission stations with converts, they had at the same time failed to develop the natural religious content already present in their African converts.<sup>47</sup> Elphick has put forward a pattern that might be followed for an evaluation of failures and successes of missionary work on mission stations in areas of African control.<sup>48</sup> His contention is that the stations experienced three stages of frontier history. The first stage saw a strong African state come into contact with white neighbours. In this stage

which is appropriately called "open frontier" the African ruler allowed, or even urged a missionary to set up a station in his territory. This could have happened because the chief and his people felt insecure.<sup>49</sup> So permission was granted for the missionary to live among the tribe. In the second stage, which witnessed conflict between African and white powers, there was participation by Africans in the life of the station. This was possible because warfare between whites and blacks would have accounted for a high degree of destabilization and disorientation, especially among the weaker party. More and more Africans settled on mission stations not because they were converted, but simply to be sheltered. Finally the third stage, or "closed frontier" meant that white rule had been firmly established. In this stage Africans affiliated themselves with the church by publicly attested conversion or baptism. It is clear that the time of Nxele and Ntsikana was when the community was in the second stage rather than the final. Moreover what Elphick has said in this respect is that the motivations for conversion were political in nature rather than religious. On the other hand he disputes that they were either 'secular' or 'pragmatic'.<sup>50</sup>

Two theories have been put forward as an explanation for what is sometimes presumed to be a success of the nineteenth century missionary enterprise. The first one of these is offered by Berger and Luckman who see 'nihilation' in any tendency to convert or proselytize.<sup>51</sup> According to the view radical conversions were possible because of an ability by the powerful party

to conceptually liquidate everything that lies outside an accepted universe. In this manner nihilation is sometimes described as a negative legitimation which serves the purpose of denying the reality of phenomena that is negative according to the dominant prevailing universe. In this way threats to social definitions of reality are neutralised.

It is not difficult to imagine what the implications were here for the early African converts. On seeking entry into the Christian fold, African converts were challenged to discard traditional practices because they were perceived as a hindrance. Education and civilization were presented as means of elevation from what had otherwise been identified as an inferior cultural position.<sup>52</sup> Salvation was conceived in terms of an escape from a savage status of inferiority. Missionaries concentrated their efforts on convincing those taking refuge on the mission stations as to the immorality and sinfulness of their former traditional way of life. Referring to an occasion of the opening of a shop at Bethelsdorp which was also seen as a sign of success, Philip entered the following record :

"The experiment succeeded. The sights of the goods in their windows and in their shop produced the effect anticipated: the desire of possessing the articles for use and comfort by which they were constantly tempered, acquiring additional strength on every fresh renewal of stimulus. Money instantly rose in estimation among them:

and the women and children, finding that they could obtain what they desire by collecting the juice of the aloe, were, in a short time seen early and late, engaged in this occupation".<sup>53</sup>

Literacy made freely available to converts on mission stations proved a useful tool for nihilation. VanderKemp, Read and William emphasised this aspect of their work. By the end of his year's stay among amaXhosa VanderKemp had introduced quite a number of those people to the reading of the Bible.<sup>54</sup> This he continued as practice when he later opened the Bethelsdorp Mission Station. Joseph William and his wife ran classes for literacy among amaNgqika living near the mission station of Kat River. Ntsikana was closely associated with this missionary family.<sup>55</sup> He succeeded Joseph William when he died in 1816 because by that time Ntsikana had acquired most of the skills of being a missionary, and that included literacy. AmaXhosa were highly fascinated by the new skills of reading and writing passed on to them by the missionaries. Quite voluntarily many went to missions intermittently or permanently for the sole purpose of learning to read and write.<sup>56</sup> Some missionaries took some of their hearers into their household whereby they became inmates of missionary families.<sup>57</sup> We have already noted that Nxele spent time with the family of Vander Lingen in Grahamstown. It will be true to say that a number of missionary institutions such as Zonderbloem, the Kaffir School in Grahamstown, St. Matthew's in Keiskammahoek and Healdtown in Fort Beaufort owed their origin from that early practice of family schools. Mission stations

however had the unfortunate effect of encouraging elitism among black converts. In the course of being educated or made literate blacks were exposed to western culture. According to Ngugi was Thiong'o, ".....,harkening to the voice of the missionary God, black converts derided their old gods, together with all primitive rites associated with them".<sup>58</sup> In other words blacks lost contact with their roots, at the same time that they lost the grip on their culture and above all, land.

A strong motivation for the conversion of now destabilised amaXhosa could be found in the message of the Gospel. At the centre was the possibility of the convert getting enjoined into a Christian brotherhood. In this sense mission stations could be looked upon as centres at which Africans would be equipped with skills that would give them a foothold in the colonial society.<sup>59</sup> This at least was the expectation even though things did not quite work out that way. Such participation in the colonial society was gained on an individual basis, so that competition was thus encouraged among the converts. In this manner a capitalist Christian symbolic universe was introduced and maintained among amaXhosa. That universe has been possible to reinforce through financial support from mother churches in Europe. Following his research in Langa, Cape Town, Mafeje made the following observation: "The clergy of the 'genuine' churches were found to be educated full - time ministers .....Also, having full - time clergy meant availability of funds in the church. It is true



that the 'genuine' churches are wealthier and have proper facilities, including substantial buildings for worship. All of them enjoy financial support from white mother churches in South Africa or, in the case of some 'independent' churches, from affiliated organisations in America and Great Britain..."<sup>60</sup> My own research has revealed that some clergy and bishops of the Anglican church who came from England originally, continued to be supported while in South Africa.<sup>61</sup> Some dioceses and parishes rely on that source for the greater part of their work. It is my assessment that, whether for acceptance into a foreign social role or simply financial gain, converts who abandoned their culture, sold their souls. Nxele saw the danger in this respect, and sought re-con- Nxele  
version. His family at Mncotsho (Berlin near East London)  
 continue as "red", up to this day (ngabantu ababomvu). There are no regrets.

The second theory that has been offered as a way of understanding the options for nineteenth century African converts, has been described in terms of a choice between 'arnachism' and 'opportunism'.<sup>62</sup> The two ways of approach designated by Lenin as two opposite errors in attempting to change a target state have been called, 'ideals for foreign domination', by Cabral.<sup>63</sup> The conflict in the way the options were viewed, either as errors or ideals, has determined that there should be endless debate around them, especially among political scholarship. 'Arnachism' is a political term used to describe a stance of liquidation

of the population within a dominated country. The aim is to finally destroy the cultural, ultimately moral resistance among the members of the target state. To this extent missionaries were Leninists in that according to Elphick, they saw no purpose in building a Christian Society on an African base.<sup>64</sup> We have already pointed out in this respect that most missionaries pursued a destruction of the African social systems because they had decided they were evil. Arnachism therefore compares with nihilation, because of the negative attitude towards existing structures. But it is much more radical in the sense that it advocates a practical destruction of obstructive structures, rather than by discouraging the structures by adopting a negative attitude to them. Here missionaries did not just persuade African families to cease to indulge in the offering of sacrifice, for example. Offending families were literally removed from the mission station.<sup>65</sup>

'Opportunism' which was an alternative form of dealing with a dominated people, emphasised co-operation with existing structures. Missionaries using this strategy sought ways of imposing their culture without actually causing damage to the culture they were seeking to dominate. Attempts were thus made whereby the capitalist economic and political domination of their target was harmonized with their cultural personality.<sup>66</sup> Not many missionaries adopted this option in their work of evangelization among amaXhosa. Throughout South Africa in fact this option was viewed rather as a deviation by only a few. Bishop Colenso who

preferred to strive for the transformation of African cultures rather than their destruction was among a minority.<sup>67</sup> There was a second reason why opportunism would not work in South Africa, and that was because the chiefdoms of amaXhosa were politically unstable. Between the years 1795 and 1806 the Cape had exchanged hands of government between Holland and Great Britain, twice. Inter-tribal wars among amaXhosa and those against whites had caused a state of political disarray.

#### EDUCATION AND CULTURE

In recent years there has developed a keenness to rediscover African culture, as well as restore that as a medium of communication in Africa, between the western Christian and his African counterparts. My fieldwork among amaXhosa of the Eastern Cape and Border area (the latter includes parts of the Transkei), has revealed a social co-existence between 'abantu ababomvu' (red blanketed Xhosa) and 'abantu abafundileyo' (educated Xhosa).<sup>68</sup> There is constant interaction among educated and uneducated amaXhosa. Occasions of community rituals such as funerals and weddings tend to witness obliterations of traditional lines of demarcation between the two sectors of African societies. The pendulum has swung in favour of the uneducated. Among the educated it is nowadays counted a matter of status to be able to claim connections with some red family (usapho olubomvu). The connections are publicly claimed at cultural rituals such as circumcision or funerals. For example at a funeral of an African

Archdeacon of the Anglican Church taking place at St. Luke's Mission (eNxaruni near East London) about five years ago, pagan members of his family were allowed a role in the proceedings. Certain traditional rites were handled by an elder of the family, sometimes with the church ignorant of what was actually happening. In effect two priests officiated at that funeral, one Christian, the other traditional. Regarding the soul of the African, there is a level in the spiritual life of the African that would not be satisfied, should the traditional practice not feature.<sup>69</sup> Secondly, it has always been my concern that when I went to the circumcision school, the church was not represented. No doubt our warden (ikhankatha) was a Christian, but that affiliation kept a low profile. Throughout my stay in the bush, I had a sense of being enveloped in a spiritual relationship with my ancestors. The healing came about because the intricacies of tribal ritual had been strictly observed. If there was any regard to the involvement of Christ to all that was happening, that was very negligible.

The second discovery that I made during fieldwork was that of a sense of dignity that the uneducated exhibit nowadays. During interviews there was a constant claim to 'Thina bantu ababomvu' (we the red blanketed). The remark tended to elicit a sense of shame, as the indication was that of a difference between the pure and corrupted amaXhosa. In district magistrate offices and hospital admission blocks one often heard the claim made to

nurses and clerks, 'Kaloku andikwazi kubhala, ndibomvu' (Do realise that I am unable to write, for I am red). These statements are made by people without the slightest desire to change. Instead some pride of status is exhibited by those making the statements. According to Mafeje, the uneducated amaXhosa are not concerned about being assimilated into the Christian European culture.<sup>70</sup> An assessment often made by both the educated and uneducated is that of being saved from self-alienation, through resistance to western culture. My experience of sharing a prison cell with amaBomvana from the Willowvale district (Transkei) yielded quite a precious material. There is something about the crude African personality. It can be cause for envy to anyone who has lost it. In this age of black consciousness there has been a swing towards the stance of a militant/cultural resistance among young blacks. Peires believes that the position of the present generation of black young people compares to that of Nxele.<sup>71</sup> It has not been accidental that black education should come under severe scrutiny. A form of racial discrimination has determined that blacks would be subjected to certain restrictions when it came to entering the labour market. In spite of educational qualifications they might have, they are denied opportunities of competing against their white counterparts.<sup>72</sup> This whole situation has demonstrated that education is not the only variable for gaining a foothold in a racist colonial society.

Conversion to Christianity would have been experienced as a very

acute emotional pain by amaXhosa of the nineteenth century. This became so because one had to abandon one's culture. The many who joined Christian mission stations maintained a schizophrenic type of existence. There was a side in their lives that they were ashamed of, and that was concealed to the rest of the Christian brotherhood. This behaviour was reinforced by impatient missionaries who, refusing to recognise the need to enter into dialogue with the culture of their candidates, proceeded to indoctrinate them. On encountering tendencies of resistance among adults, missionaries began directing their efforts at the children of the natives. In this connection problems of discipline emerged. Children educated to certain levels of sophistication began to disobey their parents. They looked down upon some of the traditional practices and customs of their people. Boys began to dislike herding and crop minding duties. Girls on the other hand rejected the polygamous forms of marriage.<sup>73</sup> In this manner education and conversion, because they involved withdrawal from the masses caused social instability among the black community of the Eastern Cape. The most important point that is made in this respect is that early nineteenth century Christian Education because it was ideological, would not debate with African culture. There was no scope for amaXhosa to be critical in their approach towards the education offered in mission institutions.

Paulo Freire has drawn a very interesting comparison between

'integration' and 'adaptation' for us to use in criticising this lack of objectivity as African culture encountered Christianity.<sup>74</sup> By integration Freire refers to a capability to adapt to new reality, while at the same time reserving to oneself the critical capacity to make choices, and to transform that reality. Adaptation on its own simply means submission to reality. There is no scope for those involved to make choices of whatever kind. Their role is prescribed for them externally. Anyone unpliant possibly because of a revolutionary spirit, is invariably termed 'maladjusted'. It is when these two terms, 'integration' and 'adaptation' are applied to specific human situations that the implications for participants become even clearer. Any strange situation has a way of posing demands for the alien to adapt, even if it is simply to a strange environment. At the beginning one lacks power to bring about change. It will therefore be expedient for one to conform, something that might demand humility on his part. According to what is said here VanderKemp and Read were adapting to their African environment when they married an African and a slave girl respectively.<sup>75</sup> This is questionable though because there are no records of the missionaries ever making a prestation of lobola. Their marriages could not be African.

We have still to experience the integration of European and African culture in the Eastern Cape. There is little critical content in the relationship of the two cultures. European missionaries, irrespective of the amount of time they have spent in Africa, have retained Europe as the centre of focus.<sup>76</sup> It has been the

African, pressurised to rework his culture along European lines, that was denied opportunities of making a Christian contribution that was uniquely African. Above all Africa lost the right to work out some of the implications of the Gospel for her own situation. At this same time an even worse situation developed which had more disastrous consequences. "The worst crime that can be laid at the door of the white man (who, it must be said, has done many a worthwhile and praiseworthy thing for which we are always thankful) is not our economic, social and political, however reprehensible that might be no, it is that his policy succeeded in filling most of us with a self-disgust and self-hatred - the most violent form of colonisation - spiritual and mental enslavement - mental or spiritual schizophrenia".<sup>77</sup> This outcry by an African bishop of the Anglican Church, demonstrates the agony felt by a people unable to fully identify as well as feel at home in a Christianity that would not accommodate their aspirations. There is a resistance to any attempt to transform people into something else before they were Christians. Thus Tutu echoes here the outcry of many an African and Black Christian Theologian. There is a strong reaction to a Gospel message that fails to address African culture and Black experience. The next chapter will be devoted to the implications of the findings on Nxele and Ntsikana for African and Black theologies.



FOOTNOTES

1. P.L. Berger and T. Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality* (England: Penguin Books, 1966), p 113
2. A.W. Beck, "An Introduction to Philosophical Research" Pediguide 22 Nottingham University School of Education Nottingham 1981, p5
3. Richard Elphick, "Africans and the Christian Campaign in South Africa". In H. Lamar and L. Thompson, Frontier History (New Haven: Yale University Press 1981) p 271
4. The Word 'inyanga' is used in a broad sense that accommodates VanderKemp, Read. Moffatt, the archbishop of Canterbury etc.
5. Peires, Nxele, Ntsikana and the origins of Xhosa Religious Reaction.
6. M. Douglas, Implicit Meanings (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975) p 73
7. In the Diocese of Grahamstown while there is reluctance about the appointment of blacks to white parishes, it is regarded as normal when white priests are given charge over black parishes.
8. R. Elphick, "African and the Christian Campaign in South Africa" p271  
 "In Southern Africa it was the African losers, rather than the European winners, who reworked their culture more thoroughly as a result of the frontier experience".

9. Zvomunondita J.W. Kurewa, "The Meaning of African Theology",  
Journal of Theology for Southern Africa 11 June 1975 p 32
10. George P. Fisher, History of the Christian Church  
(New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1931) pp 549 - 559
11. F.E. Deist and I Du Plessis, God and His Kingdom (Pretoria:  
J.L. Van Schanck, 1981) p 17
12. Ngqika had failed to observe the taboo as prescribed by  
his community i.e. (Ukuhlonipha umka - Yisekazi - respecting  
his uncle's wife).
13. Thomas H. Groome, Christian Religious Education (San  
Francisco: Harper and Row Publishers, 1980) p 13
14. The distinction between what Nxele represented on one  
hand and what Ntsikana was about has parallels in what, for  
example happened among the Catholics and the Evangelicals in  
an English setting.
15. On being converted Ntsikana put away Nomanto, the mother  
of Dukwana. This demonstrated the degree of his seriousness  
about Christian practice. (Information gathered in an inter-  
view with Nompilo Tabata of East London).
16. R. Elphick, "Africans and the Christian Campaign in  
South Africa" p 273
17. P. Berger and T. Luckmann, The Social Construction of  
Reality p 120

18. It is my submission that belief in ancestors is a universal phenomenon. Visits to West minster Abby, Trafalgar Square, Central Pretoria, Grahamstown or Cape Town have availed evidence that confirms. These places are all infested with statues that depict events from the past of communities.

19. P. Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed (New York: Seabury Press, 1970) p58f

20. Berger and Luckmann, The Social Construction of Reality p120

21. P. Freire, Cultural Action for freedom (Cambridge: Harvand Educational Review, 1970) p 20

22. Peires, The House of Phalo p 70

23. M. Westphal, History and Truth in Hegel's Phenomenology (New Jersey: Humanities Press Inc., 1979) p 9

"Hegel seeks as pedagogue to evoke in each of his readers the insight he has already achieved for himself. This carries no implication as is often charged, that one must already be in the realm of Absolute knowledge to follow Hegel's argument..... the reader can see for himself what is there to be seen and does not need to take anything on Hegel's authority".

24. Groome, Christian Religious Education p 116

'False consciousness' is consciousness that merely reflects their superstructure of an unjust society and accepts that superstructure as legitimate. With reference to our case the suggestion is that Christianity did not reflect what was happening in the society. Rather it had an autonomous form of existence.

25. Wlphick, "African and the Christian Campaign in South Africa", p 283

26. J.I. Mosala, "African Traditional Beliefs and Christianity", Journal of Theology for Southern Africa No. 43 June 1983 p 15

R. Gill, Theology and Social Structure, London:

A.A. Mowbray, 1977, p 5

"If theology is treated as an autonomous discipline, regulating its own canons and methods of procedure and owing nothing to society at large, an account of it in terms of the sociology of knowledge is not possible. Whereas it might be possible to present a philosophical or historical account of it, a specifically sociological one would thereby be excluded".

27. Elphick, "Africans and Christian Campaign in Southern Africa", p 278

28. In an interview with former farm residents of Southwell (Albany district), it was revealed how it sometimes took the African community quite a time before they realised that the land that they were on was no longer theirs. To some white stranger a piece of land was sometimes granted by an unsuspecting black community. The stranger, because of his ties with the colonial power, was regarded as means of protection. After a time the stranger turned owner of the land with the necessary paper to do as he wished. This seems to have been a pattern followed in a number of instances.

29. Ashley, "Universes in Collision", pp 28 - 31

30. Peires, House of Phalo, pp 65 - 66
31. G.M. Setiloane, "Confessing Christ Today" Journal of Theology for Southern Africa No. 12 September 1975 p 36
32. Ashley, "Universes in Collision" pp 28 - 31
33. Peires, "Origins of Xhosa Religious Reaction" p 61
34. Dwane, "CHRISTIANITY IN RELATION TO XHOSA RELIGION"  
see Abstract.
35. P.L. Berger, Invitation to Sociology New York: Garden City, 1966 p 112
36. A. Boesak, Farewell to Innocence Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1977 p 80
- N. Majeke, The Role of Missionaries in Conquest Johannesburg: The Society of Young Africa, 1952
37. Ngugi Wa Thiong'o Home Coming London: Heinemann, 1978 p13
38. K. Crehan, "Ideology and Practice" p 5
39. Ashley, "Universes in Collision" p 36
40. Boesak, Farewell to Innocence pp 81 - 2
41. Ashley, "Universes in Collision" p 32

42. William Shaw, The story of My Mission in South - East Africa London; Hamilton Adams, 1860 p 137

43. Elphick, "Africans and the Christian Campaign in South Africa" p 286

44. G.M. Setiloane, The Image of God among Sotho-Tswana Cape Town: A.A. Balkema, 1979 p 91

45. Ibid., p 91

46. AmaNggika were an exception to this rule, The chief received instruction from VanderKemp as far as the reading of the Bible was concerned.

47. Elphick, "Africans and the Christian Campaign in South Africa" p 285

48. Ibid., p 288

49. Setiloane, Image of God among Sotho-Tswana p 134

50. Elphick, "Africans and the Christian Campaign in South Africa" p 289

51. Berger and Luckmann, Social Construction of Reality pp 132-34

52. A. Mafeje, "Religion, Class and Ideology in South Africa", David Philip, Religion and Social Change Cape Town: Balkema, 1975 p 169

53. J. Philip, 1828 Researches in South Africa London: J. Duncan pp 204 - 6

54. A.D. Martin, Dr, VanderKemp London: The Livingstone Press, 1931 p 34
55. B. Holt, Joseph Williams South African: Lovedale Press, 1954 pp 42 - 43
56. Elphick, "Africans and the Christian Campaign in Sout Africa" p 291
57. Setiloane, Image of God among Sotho-Tswana p 149
58. Ngugi wa Thiong'o Home coming p 10
59. Crehan, "Ideology and Practice" p 12
60. A. Majeke, Religion, Class and Ideology p 169
61. White Anglican clergy and bishops from England and sponsored by U S P G (United Society for the Prepagation of the Gospel) in London have their holiday travel and boarding overseas paid for by that Society.
62. V.I. Lenin, The State and Revolution Peking: 1973 pp 47 - 60
63. A. Cabral, "National Liberation and Culture", Ayo J. Langley, Ideology of Liberation in Black Africa 1856 - 1970 London: Rex Collings, 1979 p 703
64. Elphick, "Africans and the Christian Campaign in South Africa" p 284

65. Some white farmers do this to families of black labourers. Invariably no prior arrangement is made for alternative accommodation. It happened to Mr Antoni of KwaZakhele. He and family left Thornhill near Humansdorp to live in Fairview on being kicked out by a farmer with whom he had always halved produce.

66. A. Cabral, "National Liberation and Culture" p 703

67. P. Hinchliff, The Anglican Church in South Africa London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1963 p 64f

68. D..William, "Missionaries in the Eastern Frontier of the Cape Colony 1799 - 1859" Ph D Thesis, University of Witwatersrand, July 1959

"The fact that abakweta (circumcision initiation) ceremonies take place two miles from the University College of Fort Hare. In the year 1959 symbolises the missionary failed significantly to influence the way of life of the rank and file of the tribal amaXhosa".

69. The Western profession of priesthood has not and cannot obliterate the importance of the traditional inyangà as far as umXhosa is concerned.

70. A. Mafeje, "Religion, Class and Ideology in South Africa" p 178

71. Peires, "Origins of Xhosa Religious Reactions" p 61



72. It is as one entered the labour market and consequently competed against others, that one felt the inferiority of Bantu Education to most.

73. Ashley, "Universes in Collision" p 37

74. P. Freire, Education and Critical Consciousness London: Sheed and Ward, 1974 p 4

75. Crehan, K. op cit p 484

76. The Kaffir Express An English - Kaffir Journal Vol No. 6 South Africa: Lovedale 3 March, 1871

77. D.M. Tutu, "Black Theology/African Theology - Soul Mates or Antagonists" G.S. Wilmore and J.H. Cone, Black Theology New York: Orbis Books, 1979 p 484

## CHAPTER 8

## NXELE AND NTSIKANA:

THEIR IMPLICATIONS FOR AFRICAN AND BLACK THEOLOGY  
TODAY.

This final chapter of the study is devoted to an examination of the implications that the religious outlooks of Nxele and Ntsikana might have for African and Black theology. The aim here is to discover suggestions that might emanate from the standpoints of the iinyanga for the two theological approaches. The examination shall, on the other hand, be of a dialectical nature in that the African and Black theological perspectives shall respond critically to the historical roles of the iinyanga: Therefore it shall be necessary to comment on the historical origins of the two theological approaches. It is recognised that Black Theology and African theology resulted from the same concerns. They are reactions to the same West European Christian practice. African and Black theology are the offspring of the unfortunate nuptials of Christianity and African culture in the case of African theology, and Christianity and black experience in that of Black theology.<sup>1</sup> Even though African and Black theology have the common concern of liberating the Gospel from foreign Western wrappings which assume the form of a capitalist culture, they approach the problem differently.<sup>2</sup> That difference is explainable on socio-historical grounds. There are striking parallels between the feud involving these two theologies, and what we have illustrated as the difference in the religious out-

looks of the iinyanga who are under study in this thesis.

Recent historic and religious scholarship has rightly pointed to a contribution that Nxele and Ntsikana made towards a synthesis of Christianity and African religious tradition.<sup>3</sup>

They were in the forefront of the religious response of amaXhosa to Christianity even though they differed in the manner of response  
We have already established how the matter of insistence or not on African religion and culture accounted for the diversity in the reactions of the iinyanga, and consequently the Xhosa community. Their reactions are compared in this chapter with the enterprises of African and Black theologians. There are found to exist certain similarities between the concerns of the nineteenth century iinyanga and the twentieth century Black and African theologians.

Nxele and Ntsikana, the originators of the diverse religious outlooks of amaXhosa occupied the same geographical area and had as background, the same socio-historical situation. They were exposed to and were responding to the same pressures of the nineteenth century East Cape frontier. In this sense their religious outlooks though different, were both very native and authentic.<sup>4</sup> This claim cannot be made about both African theology and Black theology as they stand today. Bearing in mind a criticism by a black theologian, Buthelezi in this regard, African theology has still to convince its oppres-

sed black South African audience that it had not opted for a reconstruction of the African past which it then romanticised at the expense of the dynamic present.<sup>5</sup> On the other hand Black theology, originating as it does from an American background, has it as a task to fully identify with the cultural life of its adopted South African situation. Here recognition might be given to the way a stranger is sometimes challenged to state with what seriousness he regarded his hosts. That happens even where the hosts were satisfied as to the stranger's goodwill and intentions. Justification for the existence of Black theology in what is otherwise a foreign domain must extend beyond the subtleties of argument, however convincing those might be.

AFRICAN THEOLOGY: In the preface of his book entitled 'Christology in the Making', Dunn<sup>6</sup> rightly stated how Christianity began with Jesus. In other words Jesus was the dominant figure with whom the early church had to wrestle. All effort by the early church was devoted to attempts to recover what Jesus the founder, had done or said. But as time went on the church emphasised the recovery of what early Christians understood of Jesus's sayings, for all their theological reflection. A further swing according to Saayman has resulted in a situation where not the church but the world became the actual object of all theologizing.<sup>7</sup> It is in the world that God is at work. With the world seen as the object of God's

loving concern, it became a concern for the church to be relevant to its cultural environment. Otherwise it was rightly feared that the church might exist as a maladjusted institution.<sup>8</sup> Not only in Europe but in Africa as well there emerged a challenge for the church to be indigenized.<sup>9</sup> The church had to be made relevant to its context of existence. It had to address the needs and concerns it encountered in the varied fields of its expansion. Theoretically the origins of African theology with its emphasis on a cultural location, are to be found here.

Nyamiti recognized that some missionaries and church leaders had in fact laid the foundations for African theology. They did this by way of making efforts to adapt the Christian message to the African people.<sup>10</sup> Appreciable though this observation by Nyamati is, it is questionable on two points. There is a suggestion in it that blacks even in the area of their relation to God, have always relied on others doing the interpreting for them. In this case blacks had to wait for the missionary to do the adaptation for them. The second ground on which to question the issue of the missionaries as the initiators of the effort involves the question of continuity or discontinuity of culture after conversion. Research has revealed how hardly do Africans discard their cultural identity on being converted to Christianity.<sup>11</sup> Africans have always retained their culture, and that in spite of their conversion to Christianity.

As a quest proceeding along academically defined lines African theology can, strictly speaking, be said to have originated in the late sixties. It was directly or indirectly influenced by the gain of political independence by a number of African states at that time. In this sense African theology was developed because of a situation of need politically. The western form of theology which was no longer tenable, simply failed to be satisfactory as well as convincing. Available African theology scholarship was caught napping by that developing situation. Trained in West European Universities and Colleges, Africans ill-equipped to theologise as Africans should do. They had wrong tools for the job.<sup>13</sup> In this way African theologians simply helped to perpetuate a system of adaptation and interpretation that their missionary mentors had initiated. Of interest here is the fact that only as recently as 1975 did Kurewa complain that the whole conception of what is Christian in Africa has not yet genuinely become African enough for authentic expression of the faith, or authentic expression of the Christian church on this continent. The availability of indigenous thought forms has not yet been tapped enough for use in doing theology.<sup>14</sup> In this respect it is possible to say that Kurewa was articulating a concern that was there among a number of African theologians. He certainly was echoing the words of Idowu made in the mid sixties.<sup>15</sup>

# IMPORTANCE OF CONSULTATIONS AND CONFERENCES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF AFRICAN THEOLOGY.

Conferences and consultations have played a significant role in the development of African theology. According to Setiloane<sup>16</sup> the view one has of African theology tends to be influenced by the matter of what conferences he has attended. The ascendancy of the concept 'theologia Africana' gained momentum through deliberations at those conferences, and the same conferences were popular in the sixties and onwards. Among centres that have hosted these were Ibadan, Abidjan, Kampala, Bangkok and Jos. While the Kampala consultation of 1972 might be said to have been important for Fashole-Luke,<sup>17</sup> it was Bangkok that made an impression on Setiloane. The latter conference was held in the same year. Kampala which was organised by the All African Church Conference (AACC) dealt with the question of 'African theology and Church life'. Bangkok which was sponsored by the World Council of Churches (W.C.C.) wrestled with the why? of the idea of 'Moratorium'.<sup>18</sup>

All these efforts to make Christian theology relevant to Africa were not only tolerated but encouraged by Christian scholars of the western world.<sup>19</sup> There were hesitations about giving support however when Setiloane, Kibicho and Gaba were seen as pushing a rather too radical a line. Given as an example for this tendency has been the way these three black theologians have argued for the supremacy of the traditional Supreme Being over any translation of the name of God in

Christian literature.<sup>20</sup> Their problem was similar to that of Nxele who distinguished between the God of whites and that of blacks. As understood by those theologians God who was not human and thus had no limitations could never die. Relying on his research on the subject, Setiloane refers to that Being in terms of the third person, singular neuter saying that the IT is immense, incomprehensible, wide, tremendous and unique.<sup>21</sup> All this tends to be found provocative by west European scholarship for the manner it conflicted with their entertained biblical concept of God.

#### TRANSCENDENCE AND INTERMEDIARIES

Complaints have been made by Western scholars against a dilution of the Gospel that African theologians indulge in. Consideration that the latter give to the ancestors, has provided material for the accusations. The other term used by orthodox scholars for what happens here has been syncretism.<sup>22</sup> The suggestion that has often been made in this respect has been that of certain phenomena that should not be entertained for the manner they might otherwise pollute what is otherwise sacred. Without dilution and syncretism from the African theological practice, the Gospel existed in a state of purity. According to Dunn this is hardly true.<sup>23</sup> If pre-Christian Judaism had room for divine hypostases and intermediaries, ~~that~~ monotheism was diluted. In ~~that~~ case the dilution made provision for the acceptance of the Christian doctrine of



incarnation. Jesus was an incarnation of one of the 'intermediary beings'. Intermediary beings have always served the purpose of asserting the nearness as well as the involvement of God in the world.

It has been as part of the concept of a transcendent God that ideas about intermediaries evolved. The distinction made between God and man necessitated a lot of philosophical polemic even among Western Christian Scholarship.<sup>24</sup> African scholars could not have been an exception here. Mosala points out in this regard that the African as against the Western did not have problems about the transcendence.<sup>25</sup> The African strongly believed in an absolute reality which, though it manifested itself in the world, also reserved the power to transcend it. This belief the African entertained irrespective of the historical context in which he was placed. On this basis Mosala submits that God is present in every situation of human struggle. It has in fact been the intensity of any struggle for survival that has caused the most pertinent questions to be raised about God.<sup>26</sup> An African Christian theology has it as its primary task to explicate the mode of being in the world.<sup>27</sup> That means that the life situation of the people has to be regarded with seriousness. According to Goba an African Christian theology which failed to take seriously its political context of the black African experience of oppression could only be a gross failure to understand

the social implications of the Gospel and thus irrelevant.<sup>28</sup>

What this whole thing suggests is that African theology should not be narrow in the exploration of its task. The work of theology involves more than simply expounding texts with no due attention to what was happening in the Community. It is not just about theorizing. Rather there is a demand for the theologian to engage in the affairs of his contemporary situation.

#### THE CHRISTOLOGICAL PROBLEM:

Whether African theological reflections on the meaning of the incarnation are bound or should in fact proceed along the same channels as those of the Western man, is a question that deserves scrutiny. In fact not even within the camp of western scholarship can the matter of the doctrine of the incarnation be said to be conclusively settled. A need to explain the implications of that doctrine in new ways using new categories has been felt since the Enlightenment.<sup>29</sup> The conflict in this respect is even greater among the circles of African theology. Felt is the need for an exploration of contributions that the incarnated African context might make towards the development of a relevant African Christology. The History of Religious School has pioneered the investigations. These investigations have revealed a Hellenistic religious syncretism in the concept of the incarnation. The doctrine as imparted by the Western church bears wrappings provided by its context of origin.

Attempts have been made to relate the Christology to the African situation. The objective has been to make Christology meaningful to its African setting. One of such attempts was made at the Pan - African Conference of Third World theologians held in Accra in 1977.<sup>30</sup> At that conference Setiloane launched the idea of developing 'an authentic African Christology' in terms of the understanding of the role of inyanga in African societies. There is recognition among African theological circles that inyanga provides a major Christological paradigm. The inyanga has a unique significance among Africans for the manner he has been referred to whenever healing was desirable. Africans had a need for a Christology that expressed amongst them those qualities that were invariably associated with the role inyanga fulfilled. Their contextual situation riddled as it was by strife and suffering posed demands for a healing of a political, social, economic and psychological nature. Recently a claim was made by Chikane that African Christology could hardly begin with confession.<sup>31</sup> His argument was that there was a whole process to go through before anyone could assume any philosophical position on the subject of the Christology. His conclusion was that John I: 1-14 could hardly be a reasonable starting point for an appraisal of the Christology by an African. Rather than simply adopt as well as adapt what has been passed on by Westerners, the African has it as a duty to discover what the implications of the Christology are for his situation.<sup>32</sup>

There is a good reason why African theologians should want to take the situation of their clientele much more seriously as they developed their Christology. Caught up as many of them are in situations that do not only dehumanize but brutalize people, African theologians can ill afford to confine their exercise to simply making claims about a brotherhood that Christ shares with us. Christ has it as an obligation to address the suffering that people have to endure through colonisation and oppression. It will be through the involvement of Christ in these situations that the African will then be enabled to confidently confess with others that 'Surely this is the Son of God'. It is therefore for the reason closely related to the existential experience of the African that African theology has had interest in the victorious Christ (Christus Victor).<sup>33</sup> The emphasis on the culture is there because African theologians have identified the need to affirm the identity and personhood of the African who is caught up in situations that dehumanise.

#### NXELE AND NTSIKANA AND THEIR RESPONSE TO AFRICAN THEOLOGY.

The parallels between what African theologians strive for and the roles fulfilled by the iinyanga among amaXhosa society are very striking. Both Nxele and Ntsikana for example attached importance to consultations with christian missionaries. They had meetings with Van der Kemp, Read, William, and in the case of Nxele Van der Lingen whom according to Pringle he puzzled with metaphysical subtleties or mystical ravings.<sup>34</sup>

In these mystical ravings, Milton has rightly observed that there was an awakening sense of Black identity and consciousness.<sup>35</sup> Whatever Nxele did as part of such mystical ravings, there remains one thing clear and that is, his contact and relationship with Western Christian Missionaries was not at the expense of his Africanness. He did not simply imbibe all that they imparted without question.

There was some originality about the way the Ndlambe inyanga synthesised Christianity with African religion. Nxele drew sharp distinction between 'Thixo' the God of the missionaries and Dalidipu (or Mdali), the God of amaXhosa.<sup>36</sup> His conception of Dalidipu was interesting in the sense that it was in terms of communal body Nxele understood God. God was not a single person, but a father, a mother with long pendant breasts who brought rain and a son, Tayi. It must be mentioned that even though to amaXhosa God did take human form, it was inconceivable for those people to imagine God dwelling amongst men. This would have been an extreme form of immanence, something they would have found difficult to cope with. Consequently amaXhosa would have found it just as difficult to cope with situation where man put God to death. On the other hand Nxele was able to accommodate the 'resurrection' because there was belief in the continuity of life among amaXhosa.<sup>37</sup> This then accounts for the way Nxele was able to cope with Easter, strange though the idea of the death of God might have proved to be. In this respect Nxele can rightly be said to have been

the father of African theology. He did in the nineteenth century what African theologians are about in the twentieth.

His approach to Christendom was that of entering into dialogue with it taking seriously what was African and traditional about himself.<sup>38</sup>

It was soon after his conversion to Christianity that Nxele began to preach: 'Forsake Witchcraft! Forsake blood!' something Peires claims was very unusual even for a diviner.<sup>39</sup> It was even more unusual when considered against its contextual political situation. AmaXhosa had recently been expelled from the Zuurveld. That situation with parallels in contemporary black townships would have witnessed an escalation of violence among amaXhosa as a group. It was a situation that could be explained in terms of the pressures to which amaXhosa were subjected through being dispossessed of their land by powerful aliens. It cannot be doubted that instances of smelting out on accusations of witchcraft escalated among the black community. There were executions of a large number of amaXhosa by others. No one dared to interfere for fear of either being accused of witchcraft or simply collaboration with oppressive forces.<sup>40</sup> It is when tested against that background that the message of Nxele is best appreciated. He took a decisive stand against such mindless operations by his own people.

\* The silence of Ntsikana on these matters that African theologians and Nxele raised about the concept of God and the Christology is too eloquent to be passed by without comment.

There is reason to be concerned particularly when consideration is given to the manner the inyanga of amaNgqika has been presented as having prepared the way for Christianity among

amaXhosa. Hodgson has made the observation: "He (Ntsikana) is remembered for preparing the way for the Gospel among his countrymen during the early part of the nineteenth century and is revered by many as a prophet and a saint".<sup>41</sup> It is

that 'preparing of the way for the Gospel' that is crucial to this inquiry. How did Ntsikana go about with matters in this regard? Was it by adaptation or integration that

\* Ntsikana managed to cope with what Western Christianity was about on the land of his ancestors? On the other hand, quiet though Ntsikana was on those matters, he did not seem to lack in followers. His image was kept alive until recently by successive generations of amaXhosa Christians.<sup>42</sup> Black clergy, politicians and people from the Eastern Cape, Border and Transkei used to value attendance at Ntsikana Memorial Services.<sup>43</sup>

What attitude Ntsikana had towards Christianity cannot be fully understood without any reference to the attitude of his amaNgqika community towards European political power. Rather than challenge that power amaNgqika sought ways of cooperating. This disposition was maintained by them even when matters were

to their detriment. Ntsikana pursued this stance which he had thus inherited, in the Christian arena. This determined that he should do his best to discover what the expectations of his missionary mentors were as well as bring his religious practice into line with them This became the reason why he desisted polygamy, even when he had already married two women. Comment has already been made as to how he had stopped to attend intlombe (traditional parties) as well as smear his body with imbola. Discarded also at that same time of conversion was the traditional idea of the supreme being as understood in his own culture.

{ Ntsikana had developed a sense of sin not compatible with his culture.

{ This became the source for the same of the decisions he made about his social life.

It will be true to argue, provided we accept the postulations by Setiloane and Dwane that Africans never really discard their traditional religion; that Ntsikana provides a good example of the dilemma the average black christian is subjected to at conversion.<sup>44</sup>

In order to survive within the arena of a christianity whose perimetres were prescribed by a western cultural norm, the black has to do his best to discover what that culture was about. Even in matters of faith it becomes a preoccupation for him to recite what has been transmitted

{ intellectually. . . This situation unfortunately is perpetuated

{ in some of our Theological seminaries where there is conti-

{ nued reliance on staff from abroad.<sup>45</sup> The behaviour of a



good percentage of former students observed over a period of ten years has been very telling in this regard. It is true to say that casualties have been produced in the sense that on being plunged back into black communities where to exercise their ministry some people simply collapsed. The situation obtained because of a conflict between what were expectations of black congregations and what the western trained ministry offered.

#### BLACK THEOLOGY:

As an explicit Christian theological phenomenon Black theology originated in the United States of America in the sixties.

It came into being when black churchman in that country declared their positive stand on Black Power. They said,

'All theologies arise out of communal experience with God. At this moment in time, the black community seeks to express its theology in language that speaks to the contemporary mood of the black people.'<sup>46</sup> The statement was expressive of a shift of emphasis in the appreciation of the Gospel message. There was a problem with the West Christian way of theologising, where emphasis was on spirituality rather than the liberatory nature of the Gospel. Black Americans began to challenge the claims to universalism as exhibited by western theologians.

They argued rather for concreteness and specificity about problems that Christian theology addressed.

In his essay, 'The Historical Origins of Black Theology',

Motlhabi has appropriately observed, "From the very beginning Black Theology in South Africa was seen to stand with one leg in Africa and the other in Black America".<sup>47</sup> That straddle across the two continents has accounted for a lot of suspicion in the way that Black theology was regarded by a number of African theologians. There has been a resistance to some of the claims that Black theology set out to make on behalf of the black people of Africa. Mbiti expressed the mood among many Africans when he said, "Blackness is a circumstance that brought it (Black theology) into being. It speaks of a Black God, Black Church, Black Liberation, Black this and that..... Black theology hardly knows the situation of Christian living in Africa, and therefore its direct relevance for Africa is either non-existent or only accidental.....to try and push much more than the academic relevance of Black Theology for the African scene is to do injustice to both sides."<sup>48</sup> There is truth about the grounds on which African objections to Black theology stand. That does not of course mean that the objections are unchallengeable. Allan Boesak has replied to such suggestions as are made by Mbiti and others that Black theology in South Africa was brought into being by black American influence. Boesak's argument in this regard has been that Black Christians have always had an understanding of that Gospel that was at variance with that of Western Christians.<sup>49</sup> South Africans have always either been in the position of Nxele where they interpreted things in ways that were compatible with their African

traditional culture or associated themselves with Ntsikana,  
and allowed themselves to be swamped by West Christian tradi-  
tion. The dilemma for the South African black christian has  
 in this respect involved making a choice between his tradition-  
al and the modern world.<sup>50</sup> As much as black South African  
 might empathise with the mood of a people emerging from sla-  
 very, it need to be admitted that they still lack the expe-  
 rience. Somewhere in South Africa there has always been a  
 Nxele with capabilities to stave off some of the drastic  
 effects of utter enslavement. Oppression has always met with resistance.

It was rather the coming together of Western Christianity and  
traditional African culture that gave rise to Ethiopianism in  
South Africa. Ethnologically the term 'Ethiopia' was used of  
the five races into which mankind was formerly divided which  
included the African Negro and the Negrito.<sup>51</sup> In this sense  
 Ethiopianism and Black theology are possible to regard as  
 equivalents. Ethiopianism, the South African form of Black  
theology made available to the black Christian what the West  
European Christian expression failed to offer. Similarly to  
 what happened much later in America, there was a rejection by  
 the black churchman of the tendency in Western Christianity  
 to monopolise the Gospel. For that reason Ethiopianism in  
 South Africa enjoyed an existence of suppression among Western  
 mainline churches. It was greeted as well as regarded with  
 abhorrence and suspicion by white Christians.<sup>52</sup> The spirit of

black christianity however persevered, and by the year 1945 there were no less than one thousand five hundred independent black churches in existence in South Africa.<sup>53</sup> It is beyond the scope of the present thesis to go into detail about the multiplicity of black independent churches. I would not be impossible nevertheless to reduce the reasons for their emergence to the single problem of white domination.

#### CONSULTATIONS AND DIALOGUE:

In much the same way as happened with African theology, the exponents of black theology have attached importance to the conduct of consultations. The strife at these conferences has been to turn away from the Anglo - Saxon and Germanic forms of theologising. These forms have been found to be irrelevant to the South African socio - political context. It will be true to say that the works of James Cone wielded great influence especially at the initial stages of black theology in South Africa. Cone determined the landmarks for the theological reflections that black South African Christians wanted to engage in. According to Gcaba black South Africans have found it easier to align themselves with black American thinking because of the way it addressed problems of a racial nature.<sup>54</sup> Their reliance on Cone did not mean however that South African black theologians would not be critical of him. Motlhabi for example has regretted the lack of any reference in Cone's work to African traditional religion

or black religion, black history and black culture.<sup>55</sup> Such neglect has been attributed by South African Scholars to the influence of Cone's earlier theological training. This is one of the grounds on which to argue that South African Black theologians are slaves of neither Western theology nor American black theology. Both these sources are referred to in so far as they have a relevance to the South African situation. }

The concerns of Black theology which have been responsible for giving it its character can be categorised into three headings. These are CONTEXTUALISATION, LIBERATION AND THEODICY.

CONTEXTUALISATION: There is a resistance by Black theologians to the claims by Western traditional theology for universal validity. Rather concreteness as against universalism has been identified by Black theologians as a requisite. Writing in the affirmative on this point Cone said; 'More often than not, it is a theologian's personal history, in a particular socio-political setting, that serves as the most important factor in shaping the methodology and content of his or her theological perspective.....'.<sup>56</sup> A distinction is made

by Black theologians between contextualisation and indigenisation for the simple reason the latter term has tended to be misconstrued to suggest a restoration of African tradition, culture and religion as the primary task of all theologising by blacks.<sup>57</sup> Yet contextualisation with its emphasis on the examination of the socio-political circumstances of man,

challenges oppressive structures. The strife therefore is to restore humanness and personality to the dehumanised. In South Africa Black theology starts with black people and faces the strangling problems of oppression, fear, hunger, insult and dehumanisation.<sup>58</sup>

LIBERATION: As suffering is part of the existential experience of the South African black, a need is then felt for his liberation. Luke 4:18 is accepted as the liberatory creed in this regard. In the Jerusalem Bible the passage reads:

"The Spirit of the Lord has been given to me,  
for he has anointed me.

He has sent me to bring good news to the poor,  
to proclaim liberty to the captives  
and to the blind new sight,  
to set the downtrodden free,  
to proclaim the Lord's year of favour".<sup>59</sup>

It has been a matter of regret among black theologians that this text together with another complimentary text Exodus 3:17 do not seem to have made the same impression on white theologians as they do to blacks. Yet in the situations portrayed by these texts God identifies with his suffering people. And, taking that example by God very seriously black theologians realize that by their involvement in liberatory struggles they were in fact siding with God. For God is certainly on the side of the suffering. This oversight in white theologians is succinctly accounted for by Desmond Tutu who has pointed

out how theology as the interpretation of the word of God contained in the Christian teaching, possesses the limitations and the particularities of those who are doing the theologising.<sup>60</sup>

THEODICY: Black theology has found it inevitable that it should engage in continuous debate on the subject of theology.

The situation as obtains in South African has made <sup>it</sup> mandatory that God's justice should be tested in situations of severe suffering by his creatures. With black people almost condemned to an existence on thirteen per cent of land originally theirs, God must prove that he is just. God must prove his love where infants of less than two years perish of famine and disease, doing it in a land rich in resources, and that simply because they were black. God must say something when black children of this land take to the streets where they face bullets, all because of their objection to an inferior form of education assigned them. God has to address problems encountered by blacks on the labour market where there is denial of rights. Faced by such a situation black theology finds it impossible to maintain its peace while it tenaciously adhered to a spirituality as prescribed by Western Christianity.<sup>61</sup>

#### NXELE AND NTSIKANA: RELATION TO BLACK THEOLOGY

There is a common element running across the experiences of the three communities under study at this point. AmaXhosa

suffered alienation in the nineteenth century event of expulsion from the Zuurveld. Slaves suffered disorientation on being uprooted from Africa and plunged in a foreign American land where they had no rights as humans. The contemporary experience of the blackman in South Africa punctuated by relocations for one reason or another, approaches both the expulsion and enslavement. There has developed in this sub-continent of Africa a situation that issues challenges for address by inyanga, Black theologian and African theologian. It is still a great question how best any of these agents of healing should approach the situation of need that now obtains.

In his proposal for a doctoral thesis, Mosala has rightly criticised Black theologians for their overdependence on Western ways of theologising. According to Mosala"..... while black and liberation theologians have declared independence, doctrinally, from their European and Western former mentors, they have consciously or unconsciously continued to remain slaves of the categories of biblical interpretation of the very traditions they reject".<sup>62</sup> We may recall in this respect that the three determining roots for theologising as laid out by Cone the father of Black theology, were Western theology scripture, and both past and contemporary Afro-American writings and sermons on religion and the black experience.<sup>63</sup> In South Africa Black theology even though it took the initial step of breaking away from white domination in



the late nineteen sixties as part of the U.C.M. (University Christian Movement) structure, has remained faithful to its chaperon, Basil Moore.<sup>64</sup> There have been hesitations about fully recovering what is African. For this reason Black theology exists in some form of limbo. While it vehemently denies its fraternising with Western theology, as well as its dependence on American Black theology, it on the other hand resists giving recognition to what accounts for its unique identity, its cultural make up. In this regard Black theology is nearer the position of Ntsikana than that of Nxele. While hemmed in by the boundaries set by Western theology, Black theology has made it its business to clamour for justice, peace and equality all with the hope of striking a responsive chord in a sympathetic white ear. One wonders whether theology was serving a purpose where it was communicated simply in terms of making peace before the masters of this world.

A significant feature about the present crisis of our land has been that of the black youth issuing a call for the history of blacks to be written. There has been recognition here that the present history taught in the schools of our land has been written from a White position of power, and thus not free of bias. White determination to eliminate blacks whether in the form of expulsion, slavery or relocation has meant that their past should be destroyed as well. This distortion of the past of the ~~black~~ has been found a useful weapon in this regard. The

restoration of history to a position where it could best serve the purpose of restoring the crushed black identity will not be possible without a positive appraisal of the black people's culture and religion. Therefore a different set of categories shall need to be used. There may well be a need for African scholars to effect as radical a break as saw Nxele and Chief Sechele of Bakwene retracing their footsteps, breaking away from Western Christianity while they appreciated with freshness what their fathers were about.<sup>65</sup> It is becoming clear more and more that the black cannot hope for recognition so long as he has no scope to contribute to the evolvment of the power structures of the church. Because these were most of the time brought into existence with no due reference to what was happening in the life of the black community, people must of necessity be strangers in the Western church. Their existence in the institution must therefore be one of alie-nation. This problem can only be overcome where serious attempts were made to make the church relevant to its environment. The church in Africa ought to regard with seriousness what was happening among immediate African communities. Not even those of European origin can afford to ignore what causes African to tick. That can only happen to the detriment and peril of all.

FOOTNOTES

1. B. Sundkler, Bantu Prophets in South Africa (London: Oxford University Press, 1948) p 13

2. Carr Burgess, "The Relation of Union to Mission", G.H. Anderson and T.F. Stransky, Mission Trends No. 3 Eardmans: Grand Rapids 1976 p162

3. Milton, The Edges of War p 66  
 "The teachings of Nxele were driven from the Christian theology but expressed in terms which made them meaningful to Xhosa tribesfolk".

Hodgson, "The Hymns of the Xhosa Prophet, Ntsikana" p2  
 "Ntsikana can be regarded as a prophet of the classical Biblical type, namely a wise man making a quiet application of the tradition in which he is steeped to the contemporary situation and drawing some quite clearly logical conclusions about the present and the future and God's attitude to both as it were".

4. Theologians of a phenomenological persuasion have recently pointed how the religion that will reign in any situation will be influenced by the needs of the worshipping community.

5. M. Buthelezi, "An African or Black Theology", M. Motlhabi, Essays on Black Theology (Johannesburg: U.C.M., 1972) p8

Buthelezi, "An African and Black Theology",  
 Becken H.J., Relevant Theology for Africa (Durban: Lutheran Publishing House, 1973) p20

6. J.D.G. Dunn, Christology in the Making (London: S.C.M. Press, 1980) pIX

7. J.S. Mbiti, Introduction to African Religions (London: Heinemann, 1975) p 14

8. W.A. Saayman, "Missiology, Guide I for MSB 302 - G" Pretoria 1982 p 3

M.L. Daneel, Missiology Guide I for MSB 302 - G" Pretoria 1982 p 25

9. A. Boesak, Farewell to Innocence p17

10. C. Nyamiti, "Approaches to African Theology" Torres and Fabella, The emergent Gospel. Theology from the underside of his history (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1978) p 34

11. A visit to the home of a retired teacher and prominent Methodist preacher in the Fort Beaufort area was very revealing about how much was traditionally African in your best conservative black Christian. The family had a ceremony termed "ingubo yomntwana" (a blanket for the child). This elsewhere is termed 'imbeleko'. Conversion to Christianity was not understood to mean discontinuation with things traditional.

William, "The Missionaries on the Eastern" pp i-ii

Desmond Tutu the metropolitan of the Church of the Province of South Africa made a bursary fund he founded: 'Tshezi Bursary Fund'. Tshezi is the clan name of the archbishop. The clan

name links him with his ancestors. Whatmore his son's first born is named Nompilo, and shares that name with her grandfather. Here again the practice is very much in keeping with African traditional culture.

J. Mbiti, "Some African Concepts of Christology," G.F. Vicedom, Christ and the Younger Churches (London: S.P.C.K. 1972) p 57

13. J.W.Z. Kurewa, "The Meaning of African Theology", Journal of Theology for Southern Africa No. 11 June 1975 p 35

14. Ibid., p35

15. E.B. Idowu, Towards an Indigenous Church (London: Oxford University Press, 1965) p 20

16. G.M. Setiloane, "Where are we in African Theology" p 59

17. E.W. Fashole-Luke, "The Quest for African Christian Theologies" G.H. Anderson and T.F. Stransky, Mission Trends No. 3 - Third World Theologies 1976 Grand Rapids: Eardmans

18. Setiloane, "Where are we in African Theology" p 59

19. As Boesak has pointed out, a spirit of paternalism in the past caused some Western theologians to encourage African theology. Many did it in so far as they understood African theology to be about some harmless form indigenisation.

20. Setiloane claims that the MODIMO concept of the Sotho-Tswana is superior to and a much deeper concept than the

Christian transtation. These news has been very startling to Western theologians.

21. Setiloane, "Where are we in African Theology?" 960
22. Dwane, "CHRISTIANITY IN RELATION TO XHOSA RELIGION" p 256
23. Dunn, CHRISTOLOGY IN THE MAKING pp1 - 11
24. Fashole - Luke, "The Quest for African Christian Theologies  
p 137
25. Mosala, "African Traditional Beliefs and Christianity p 21
26. Liberation Theologians emphasising the way Yahweh in :  
Exodus 3 did not only hear of or observe the suffering of his  
people but plunged himself into the situation, used that as  
justification for involvement in political struggles.
27. B. Goba, "An African Christian Theology", Journal of  
Theology for Southern Africa No. 2 1979 pp 3 - 12
28. Ibid., p 4
29. Dunn, CHRISTOLOGY IN THE MAKING p 2
30. M. Schoffeleers, African Christillogy (Amsterdam: Free  
University, 1981) p 1
31. F. Chickane, "The Incarnation in the life of the people  
in South Africa" Forum on Christianity in the Southern African  
Context Jan - Feb 1985 86 p 54

32. Mbiti, African Religions and Philosophy p 54

33. When the situation of a vacuum is taken into serious account Jesus portrayed as Christus Victor gains importance. There is an actualisation of victory over the powers of evil.

34. T. Pringle, Narrative of a Residence in South Africa  
p 279

35. Milton, The Edges of War p 66

36. Dalidiphu was superior and powerful and had the capability of punish 'Thixo and all his followers.

37. E.K. Mosothoane, "Communio Sanctorum in Africa", in Missionalia Vol No. 2 August 1973 p 89

38. Kurewa, "The Meaning of African Theology" p 36

39. Peires, The House of Phalo p 69

M. Motlhabi, "The Historical Origins of Black Theology",  
I.J. Mosala and B. Thangale, The Unquestionable Right to be Free (Johannesburg: Skotaville Publishers, 1986) p 47

40. Black South Africa of the eighties is witnessing a similar situation in the 'necklacing' (tyre burning) of people suspected of crimes ranging from witchcraft to police informing.

41. Hodgson, "The Hymns of the Xhosa Prophets" p 2

42. Peires J.B. in a private conversation observed that Ntsikana Memorial Services were organised by amaXhosa as a counter to similar memorial services that were organised by the Gingoos (amaMfengu). For there was a service observed by amaMfengu and disignated "eMqwashini".

43. Canon Jamaes Calata, the Revd W. Gawe, the Poet S.E.K Mqhayi, the Ven D. Mbopa are some of the Xhosas who in their lifetime were associated with Ntsikana Memorial Services.

44. Dwane S. Christianity in relation to Xhosa religion His abstract thesis: "Yet in bothe African independent Churches and the established many Christians maintain allegiance to Xhosa religion and the Christian faith at the same time".

Mosala, "African and Black Theologies" p 2

"For Setiloane, the need for an African theology arises not out of the desire to make the church 'African' or to use the existing Christian resources to handle the 'the existential anthropological problem of the black man in a white world'. Rather, it is spawned by the realisation that the church is already relentlessly partly traditional, and that even the most sophisticated Western trained African members of the world and another in the modern world".

45. All communication in such Theological seminaries has the boundaries whose delimitations are mapped out by West European cultural norms. Candidates hardly get the experience of testing the Gospel against own African background.



46. Statement by the National Committee of Black Churchmen,  
June 13, 1969.

J.N.J. Kritzinger, "MISSIOLOGY GUIDE I for MSB 302 - G" p 87

47. Motlhabi, "The Historical Origins of Black Theology" p 45

48. J. Mbiti, "An African Views American Black Theology"  
J.H. Cone and G.S. Wilmore, Black Theology (New York: Orbis  
Books, 1979) pp 478 - 81

49. A. Boesak, Farewell to Innocence (Johannesburg: Ravan  
Press, 1976) pp 12 - 27

50. There is a 'limping' between two worlds involved here.  
This choice is between the traditional and the modern.

51. Barnhart and Barnhart, The World Book Dictionary p 728

52. B.G.M. Sundkler, Bantu Prophets in South Africa (London:  
Oxford University Press, 1961) p 13

T.D. Verryyn, A History of the Order of Ethiopia  
(Transvaal: The Central Mission Press, 1972) p 6

53. Sundkler, Bantu Prophets of South Africa p 13

54. Goba, "Doing theology in South Africa" pp 23 - 35

55. Motlhabi, "The Historical Origins of Black Theology" p 41

56. J. Cone, God of the Oppressed (New York: The Seabury Press, 1975) p VI

Motlhabi, "The Historical Origins of Black Theology" p 39

57. Boesak and others make a point to observe difference between the two forms of theology.

58. Motlhabi, "The Historical Origins of Black Theology" p 46  
The message of Black Theology..... is liberation: to set free: Thus it fell within the umbrella of liberation theology. It recognized that blacks needed to be liberated not only from socio-political bondage, which the church tended to ignore for a pie - in - the - sky, literal interpretation of passages such as 'My Kingdom is not of this world'. Render unto Caesar that things that are Caesar's. They needed to be liberated also from religious enslavement to 'heretical' churches which fashioned the Christian teaching according to their inclinations and socio-political interests".

59. It proved possible to distinguish between what is spirit and what was social or political. For a long time these have been treated isolated entities.

60. Tutu, Hope and Suffering (Johannesburh: Skotaville Publishers, 1983) p 125

61. It is when matters having something to do with the justice of God are probed that it becomes even more difficult for a black theologian to maintain his peace in the face of injustice.

62. I.J. Mosala, "Biblical Hermeneutics and Black Theology in South Africa" (Ph D Thesis - in progress) p 1
63. Motlhabi, "The Historical Origins of Black Theology" p 41
64. Basil Moore a Methodist who was the secretary of the University Christian Movement (U.C.M.) was instrumental in arranging a number of conferences on Black Theology. He became editor of 'Essays in Black Theology, thus introducing the Black theology of James Cone to South Africa.
65. Mosala, "AFRICAN TRADITIONAL BELIEFS AND CHRISTIANITY" p20
- Setiloane, Image of God among Sotho-Tswana p 143

## CONCLUSION

This study has demonstrated how in the nineteenth century the response of amaXhosa to Christianity were divergent. There was not just one form of Christian religious expression but many. The response of each Xhosa tribal group was to a large extent influenced by the experiences of the particular group on the frontier. AmaNdlambe and amaNgqika differed in their attitude towards the invasion and the presence of the European on their land. That determined that they should at the same time differ in their attitude to Christianity, which religion was conceived at the time as that of Whites. The advancement of Christianity among amaXhosa was experienced certainly by the amaNdlambe sector as a threat to the African traditional structures. The attitude of some Christian missionaries did not help to ease the situation because they encountered African culture as a hindrance rather than a medium through which to communicate with amaXhosa. Because they had economic and political power on their side Christian missionaries were triumphant. Therefore Western Christian practice was adopted by amaXhosa not for theological reasons but because of historical circumstances. The acceptance of the Western form of Christianity was a strategy for survival.

The tendency by Western Christianity to undermine traditional religion of amaXhosa is questioned in the study. There is a reaction against attempts to achieve unity and reconciliation among black and white Christians by simply turning blacks into

some Whites culturally. There is a very strong evidence that African traditional culture cannot be discarded by the most faithful and loyal African convert. Irrespective of whether rural or urban, amaXhosa will not be able to fully suppress the urge to worship God as an African should. This then determined that amongst the most faithful Xhosa Christians, unknown to the senior officers of the Western churches, there should be syncretism.

It cannot be emphasised any more than has already happened in the study that land possession was crucial to the relationship between man and his divinity. This was true and obvious not only in the case of Christianity, Islam and Judaism, but also for African traditional religion. To lose contact with land for amaXhosa was tantamount to sacrilege. It was a betrayal of divinity, for all communication with that realm was through land. Land was the arena of involvement between divinity and humanity. It was as a man was firmly established on land that he worked out the implications of his relationship with his creator. The issue of the pattern of relationships with fellow humans with whom land was shared required that attention should be given to social life also. In this sense salvation involved both attachment to a specific area of land as well improved relations with neighbours. It was never a purely spiritual exercise.

The role of the inyanga in the Xhosa social system has been portrayed as of tremendous importance in this work. The inyanga has been conceived as having retained his position

of influence in the face of missionary and anthropological attack. As already stated in the work, the iinyanga were the agents of divinity. They provided the link between humans and divinity. They provided the kind of therapy as would harmonize the relationship between the living and the living dead. Above all, iinyanga shared in a dialectical relationship with the specific groups to which they belonged. This meant that iinyanga were influenced by the groups they belonged to, at the same time that they influenced them. For that reason it would not be possible for them to be imposters or simply agitators.

A rather exhaustive attention has been given in this study to the position of Nxele. This has been done to counter a tendency among Western Scholars to give to Ntsikana a rather excessive attention. While it is understandable why Ntsikana should attract the attention of the European Scholar, for would it not be true that he theologized in European style, it needs to be accepted that neither Ntsikana nor his Western teachers could liberate African Christianity. Liberation will be best achieved by those Africans who take matters of their traditional religion and cultural identity very seriously. It is mainly because of the way Nxele fulfilled that role in the nineteenth century Xhosaland that he provided a stimulation for this study. African theology has as much appeal among African Scholars because it seems to pick up the gauntlet. It will be as African culture was realized as important for the restoration of the human dignity of the African, and every means to recover it made, that there will be true liberation for the African. Otherwise humans are not made of simply politics and economics. There is what is 'feeling' or 'spirit' about them. Political arrangements to be satisfactory, have to take that aspect of man seriously.

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